

The Creative Process, Journey to First Animation

**MASTER THESIS
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Abstract

Bo's First Robot is a short animation about robot builder named Bo. It's a japanese style robot animation set in cyberpunk-based world. The animation is the empirical part of this thesis. Animation formed during Pixstories academical minor and exchange period in animation department of Tamabi University in Tokyo. Because the topic of the animation was developed for over two years and the production took over six months to finish, it was only logical to make it the focus of the master thesis.

Empirical part of the thesis covers the evolution of the animation and how different ideas were abandoned while working on topic. The storyboard of Bo's First Robot is compared against animatic scetch and the final animation.

Theoretical part of the thesis focuses on the creative process. It studies how Bo's First Robot was made and the reasons why it took two years to complete. Main sources for research were Irwin Singer's book *Modes of creativity* in which the creative process is studied and M.D Vernon's book *Human Motivation*, which explains how motivation can effect our work.

Keywords: Animation, Creative process, Motivation, Problem solving, Failure, Tokyo

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INTRODUCTION

-Forewords

-Animation and research

Forewords

As I was writing my thesis I read an article: “*Johannes Ekholm: Ratkaisu ahdistukseen on kollektiivinen tai sitä ei ole*” (Yle). Loosely translated solution to anxiety is collective or there is none. In this article Ekholm goes through the panic of finishing the article and fears of his own failure, and how we lose our sight of what we want for ourselves. He states that our work is linked to our identity.

Ekholm says that it’s difficult to think that we are anything else than part of the economic machine and we are dropping out all the things that bring us joy like relationships, play and art, things that are valuable in more way than just the economic growth.

We are taught that we have to be better than anybody else and to compete with our colleagues. This is harmful because best ideas are created when brains work together. Johannes says that we don not need longer CV’s and tightening the belt, We need more time wasting, inefficiency, nonchalance and carelessness. We need more escape ways from the idea that there is no failure, no retreat and there shall not be one stone unturned mentality. To be worth something you have to be better than anybody else.

Even though my thesis is not about how not to be part of economic machine. It’s how I can have time for errors and how time waisting is part of the creative process. I have had this conversation more than once with my friends. People are feeling anxious when they can’t make anything finished. The fear of waisting time and not be productive all the time can be crippling. We fail to see that it can also be about the journey not the destination. Failures need to be part of our creative process.

Animation and research

My thesis The Creative Process consist empiric part and research of the topic. My main point for the thesis is my animation. It was the project that I used considerably more time than my research.

In the research I will investigate how do creativity and motivation work together on a creative project. Is there working routines that can be learned to ensure finished project?

I will approach this topic mainly through my own work routines and use the thesis animation Bo's First Robot creation process as the main source of research. Other animators interviews and literature will also be reviewed as an additional source.

The research topic rose from my own working processes, I had four unfinished storyboards and ideas for animation and about ten pages of research that will never be used in anything. I had changed my subject four times and introduced two of them in the seminars. One of my teachers called me procrastinator but I don't recognise myself from that claim because I do work, all the time. My interest are just too wide and I change my mind constantly. I wanted to research my own process and learn from my failures so all that hard work wouldn't go to waste.

The idea for the Production to be an animation was formed in Visual communications minor studies called Pixstories. This minor contained half a year of planning and getting to know different methods of animation and storytelling. Before my exchange in Tamabi art University in Tokyo my plan was to finish my animation from Pixstories and use it as my master thesis subject. However the animation started in Pixstories was never completed, due to exchange studies in Tamabi where Professor Tatsutoshi Gon Nomura wanted to start completely new project that he would supervise from the beginning. The animation partly done in Japan will be the subject of the thesis.

Working with big project like an animation can consume lot of the animators time. If every second consists 12 frames and if the animation is two minutes long it needs 1440 individual frames to be drawn. On a good day animator can draw two seconds, if everything goes without problems. When can you be certain if the project is good enough for months of your time and that you actually want to do it? Nobody wants to end up in an arranged marriage with a bad project.

My short animation is called Bo's First Robot, in the animation her warehouse is full of unfinished robot and robot parts. When I started my storyboard I had already failed many times with the animation and abandoned four projects. I wanted to do story about resilience. As the course went along with Nomuras strong guidance, the animations length expanded from 30 seconds to the length of 90 seconds. This made the work amount considerably more than what was planned in the beginning. The visual style and the story was more developed than in the animation started in Pixstories. It was only logical to make it also subject of the master thesis.

“Creativity results from collecting items in one’s own experience and then transforming them in a practical manner that is personal to oneself.”

-Irwin Singer 2010

CREATIVITY

- What is creativity?
- Techné
- The Italian method
- Happiness
- Solving problems and the unconscious

What is creativity?

As humans we are creative beings. This is something that separates us from animals. But what is creativity? What is imagination? In this chapter I am trying to answer these questions.

“Creativity results from collecting items in one’s own experience and then transforming them in a practical manner that is personal to oneself.”

(Singer, 2011, 27) We as human beings can’t create anything that we haven’t seen or heard before. We can observe and make new combinations, even if we think inventiveness and discovery comes out spontaneously and seemingly out of nowhere. But that’s not true. Creativity is progressive and evolutionary. It’s a culmination of things that we have seen and experienced through days, weeks and even years of our lives. (Singer, 2011, 79)

Techné

Through ancient and middle ages people believed in term called techné. It was believed that artistic creation was example of techné, which is to say a skill or an undertaking designed for making objects not found in nature. The concept of techné had the great virtue of treating the different arts and crafts as similar practical behaviour. In the medieval period, as much in the ancient world, artists were envisaged as craftsmen one might hire to provide a useful service for which they were especially competent.

Specially philosopher Plato took great liking on this theory. Plato underrates the value of artistic creativity by depicting it as just the producing copy of a copy. A ideal form is needed to show the essential being of anything. A material object is a copy of some relevant ideal form, and artist presentation of that form is merely copy of that copy. (Singer, 2011, 110)

In the middle ages, idea of techné was supported by the church. The artists worked in complete anonymity and this is the reason why we know few middle age artist by name. They worked in teams, as instruments and they did not believe they were hired to display their individuality through art. They were mere technicians who conveyed the vision of the church and the religious traditions. Not only did the techné neglect the important role of beauty in art, but also it defined beauty as a moral or even intellectual property in the world, distinction that artist might create. All reality was thought to manifest aesthetic perfection by conforming to the orderliness of God’s original design. Being creative was reserved for God only. (Singer, 2011, 109)

The Italian method

But if you don’t want to create something obvious and want to get something out of yourself that’s new and not the first things that pops to mind. How then to dig deeper?

Jean Renoir had a method to work with his actors called “The Italian method”. In his method he made the actors sit around a table and made them read their lines over and over again as prosaically as possible and not to register any deep feelings of expressiveness. The actors would do this for weeks. Renoir had noted that when actors were told what to do and how to act, they would only get to commonplace assumptions of the character. After weeks of seemingly passive reading of the lines actors were expected to find their own imagination and silently and intuitively create their own personage, a separate being from what was offered by the public. Renoir saw that with his technique, actors could successfully blend their inner and outer worlds to create something new. (Singer, 2011, 31)

Happiness

Freud once said that happy people never make fantasies. Imagination on itself seems just a special type of fantasizing, imaginative creation, like day-dreaming substitute for childhood games. For certain extent, creative artist lives in fantasy and does resemble neurotic. But Freud did also say that artist can greatly benefit from his or hers fantasy. Not something that mere neurotic can do! For Freud, it follows that someone who is creative, starts with a sense of failure. And person then fills the unfulfilled life with fantasies. (Singer, 2011, 79)

Singer does not take Freud's theory with face value. He does not think that creative people duplicate childhood play but rather thinks that it's an early level of individual development to which creativity regresses, or re-enacts within the settings of adulthood. Play and art occurs in our species in every development stage. That being the case, play and playfulness must be understood as essential elements in creativity as a whole. (Singer, 2011, 87)

I can see the unhappiness as one motivation that drives artist forward. But the process does not go forward without the feeling of satisfaction. The rationality of the artistic process is largely geared to the satisfaction and dissatisfaction that the artist undergoes while being immersed or just experimenting with creative possibilities. When for example a painter looks at a color, might say "No that doesn't feel right." What he or she feels is conscious evaluation of the color as a part of the painting. Eventually decision is reached that there is nothing more left to do. (Singer, 2011, 124)

If creative process is thought to be more like as described above, it's nothing like Platon's theories. It's far from fabricating platonic abstract models that serve as ideal models. This involves the artist experience of the world. The work registers and transforms without

actually copying it in any respect. Each decision of satisfaction or dissatisfaction leads to further exploration, with no definite idea where the process of creation will end (Singer, 2011, 124). The artistic activity ends not because of predetermined goal has been miraculously achieved, but rather because artist is possibly exhausted, satiated or feels that further alteration might ruin the work. In some case artist might want to give his or hers attention to a different project. (Singer 2011, 124)

Stereotypical view is that artists are always suffering and it's true that 25% of people in creative field suffer from at least some sort of mental illness (Theguardian). But creating itself is exhilarating and life enhancing in itself but also source of joyful and powerful feelings that awakens artistic developing inventiveness and motivates for new innovations. (Singer 2011, 96)

Solving problems and the unconscious

Bernard Russell describes his working method like this: when he works hard and fruitlessly he will occasionally put it aside and let his unconscious work on the problem. When he returns to problem, he will find out that it's already been solved. His description of his method is that he studies something with great intensity for few hours or days, and then he let's underground proceed on the subject.

Brain works like digesting system. When information is fed to your brain it must digest it. And if you do work on greatest intensity, it will lead to fatigue of the brain. This will lead to strain on your intellectual power. By taking a break from the subject your brain can rest and relax. And next time you tackle the subject your creativity is actually caused by the relaxed and rested condition. In reality information wasn't pushed into a dream like unconscious which solves your problems for you. (Singer 2011, 39)

MOTIVATION

- We are not animals
- Aspiration
- The Failure
- Boring
- The Defence

We are not animals

This chapter covers what is motivation and how it effects human actions in general. Unlike other animals, we can make long distance goals and work our way to them.

It has been pointed out that human behaviour is distinct from other animals, in that we are organised, highly motivated and goal-oriented. We have overall purposiveness in our actions. When an individual is set out to perform a task, his or her actions become dominated by this cause. It's directed by rational thoughts and seemingly out of nowhere relevant and creative ideas emerge. These actions are accompanied by feelings that are pleasurable. We gain high tolerance for fatigue, anxiety and we can achieve much more effort. On the down side, these actions can be interrupted by secondary aims such as security, wealth, status and power. (Vernon 1969, 108) This type goal-oriented actions are controlled by the conscious intention and they are strongly ego-involved. We use them to identify ourselves.

When we take these type of pursuits of interest, they can be fundamental to the paths our lives take. It can mean learning a new language or a different career choice. Our points of interest and the way we want to see ourselves can and will effect how we will act. These are the reasons why all of us don't settle for a job that has nice salary, but choose vocations.

Aspiration

When we start a project we usually have a standard that we want to attain. When something is done for the first time we tend to set our aims high and with following failures and success we can make some adjustments. People tend to set their aspiration level little bit higher than previous attempt. If we fail, we are forced to lower it, but greater the success the stronger tendency to raise the level. (Vernon 1969, 117)

The Failure

Not every motivated action can achieve its goals without interruptions. There can be physical or social obstacles that cause delays or even failures. When confronting insurmountable obstacles, people's motivations tend to thwart and it can cause psychological stress. Thwarting may also occur when there is conflict of motivations. When incompatible motivations collide, only one of them can be pursued. Two types of motivated behaviours cannot be pursued simultaneously. (Vernon 1969, 134)

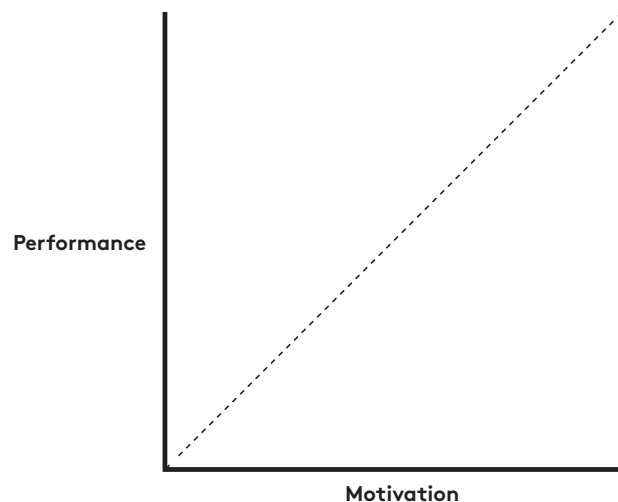
Not all obstacles are bad as they can lead for more effective course of action. Especially if they are concerning your long time goals. Failure can make you more resilient and make you put more effort on your next attempt, if there is possibility for success. But it may also lead to ingenuity and new paths to reach the goals. This is more likely to happen when there is incompatibility between what happened and what was expected to happen. Failure is important part of learning when adapting to new situation. This can create new autonomously motivated behaviours. For example, if a career in which person is interested, proves impossible, another course of action is chosen better suited for that person. But if there is no strong genuine personal motivation there is a danger of activity being abandoned. (Vernon 1969, 135)

Boring

Interaction between the forces of environment and individual motivational forces may lead to tension. When this happens, internal needs are organised in more permanent way. We have hierarchy of needs from temporary and superficial to the long-term and closely personal. When a person is doing monotone action they start to feel strained. This feeling can be endured if there is an important long term goal to achieve. Good example is an experiment, where group

of people were asked to draw lines on paper as long as they possibly can. The amount of lines they could draw on paper was greatly increased when individuals took it as demonstration of their persistence. (Vernon 1969, 141)

While making animation you have to draw same picture over and over again, so good motivation is extremely important. Like it was stated in motivation paragraph, the motivation eases the feeling of anxiety and makes you more tolerable to monotone actions. Yes, making an animation is hard work, but motivated animator does get great pleasure when their goals are achieved.



Linear relation of motivation and performance. (Wagner 1999, 140)

The defence

When a person cannot find substitute action after failure, he or she starts to get frustrated. There is three different courses of actions people tend to take. First, the punishing action, that is aimed outwards towards another person, who is believed to be the cause of frustration. Second, the punishing action that is aimed inwards and the culprit is yourself. In the third reaction to frustration, the frustration is denied or avoided by employing it as a mechanic of defence. (Vernon 1969, 147)

Different personalities act differently when facing a failure. Mature and stable person tend to tolerate failure for longer time, and they can continue the activity even when it gets difficult to overcome obstacles. Those of us who are less confident and more fearful of failure do not persist so long, they can rely on coping mechanism like rationalization to conceal their abandonment of the task. The intelligent and more adventurous person may start earlier to seek a satisfying substitute action. More temperament person might aim his or hers aggression on other object than that of the true frustration. Less conflict seeking person becomes rapidly more anxious and might start to withdraw from the situation. They also might tolerate and conceal their mistakes more often. (Vernon 1969, 155)

These kind of actions are hard to tell if they are behaviour traits or motivation. There is large number of possible traits and they vary from person to person. Motivation and personality traits walks hand in hand. (Vernon 1969, 158)

PROBLEM SOLVING

- The Mental image
- Managing the workload
- Setting the rules

Problem solving

In this part I am going through how we solve problems and our limitations and how to work our way around them.

The mental image

When you first approach a problem, you create a mental image in your head. In this mental image you will go through the problem and try to solve it (Robertson 2001, 21). Some of us might even speak out loud when we are trying to solve something. Actually, this is good habit, by doing this you remove work load of your working memory by remembering the thing you said out loud. (Robertson 2001, 27)

Once we have build our mental image we tend to stick with it even if it's wrong. Even if the mental image is good, we might leave out important details as we don't fully understand the problem. Example, room full off doctoral students run around trying to find right size of book to put under professors projector and nobody realizes that books can be opened. (Robertson 2001, 50) Ways to help to fix your mental image is to focus on different aspects of the problem. Then to look at extreme cases. Find solutions made in similar type of problems. It's important to work on your mental representations. If the representation is poor we can get stuck. (Robertson 2001, 74)

Working with the mental image in visual field has become easier in the computer age. Making fast sketches and keeping different version has made life a lot easier for many illustrators. Example when working with color you can test images and visual color combinations with a click of a button. This can make experimenting easier. When making an art piece I would say that mental image is a starting point, I would describe making a picture as a journey which destination is still unknown.

Because we have limited capacity in our working memory, there is certain amount of information that we can keep inside our head. It's only the amount of information we can keep in our head, it's also the ability to encode information, we may not be able to recognise all the relevant information. And when we get the information, our memories can distort our line of expectation. (Robertson 2001, 28)

Limited capacity in your work memory can be worked around also with computers and fast sketching you can save unlimited number of versions and you can pick the best for your goal. I do think in visual work when there is no right or wrong answers, so picking the best possible option for your goal is important. Everything comes down on point of view.

Managing the workload

When starting a new project or learning a new skill, at first everything can feel overwhelming. To help overcome this, plans can be divided as a stack of goals and sub-goals. Goal stacks are rational adaption of a world that has cause and effects to identify with. (Robertson 2001, 48) And repeating same type of projects and learning your craft actions that are part of your profession gets automated. This will free resources for new things and enables learning. (Robertson 2001, 151)

Example, an animated cat walk cycle. Cat has four legs and a tail that moves in different pace. By learning the human walk cycle you can automate the basics. Cats and all four legged animals are basically two sets of human feets. When the basics are done you can add personality to the cycle and by animating head and tail separately, you make your work easier.

Dividing work in pieces is a necessity, not optional. As my friend Terhi says, you can't eat an elephant as a whole, you have to cut it to pieces first. Even if we like to think we can do everything at once we really can't. Part of becoming professional is to know how to manage your project. Only children can do work as whole. Imagine a child taking a yellow crayon, drawing a circle and calling it a sun. We are adults with more complex thinking, more is expected.

Setting the rules

After all these ideas of creativity and how it has been something up to debate for centuries, we arrive to the next step of a long animation project. As I see it, the first part of making animation was the idea stage. The joyful exploration and creating the sets of rules how things work. The actual hard work of producing animation is more similar to Techné. Even if you are not producing platonic ideal models you have created set of rules that are your art works ideal models. To keep work as coherent these sets of rules should be followed.

Animator David O'Reilly wrote an essay about animation's basic aesthetics. For the purpose of animation, aesthetics are simply the elements that are the building blocks of the world. He uses his short animation "Please say something" as an example for his thoughts. He says that key to aesthetics is coherence. In animation you create artificial models of world. What makes these worlds believable is how coherent they are. How all the rules you have set work under your governance and how they work when you are making your decisions. Everything you do are effected by these rules; dialogue, design, sound, music, movement, etc. These will create feedback loop that reaffirms that what we look is real. Eye searches for aesthetic harmony and this harmony is created by following these laws. (Davidoreilly)

Paying attention to these rules gains the viewers trust. You can make the audience to forget that they are watching a film and by extension feel any possible emotion. Bad aesthetic can make your animation say something that you didn't intend to say at all. Like David O'Reilly says, when a lie is repeated enough times, it becomes reality, but if something extends the rules too far the illusion breaks. (Davidoreilly)

ANIMATION

- What is animation**
- Bo's First Robot**
- The Artistic production**
- Animating process**

What is animation?

During their childhood, most people are fascinated by cartoons and many retain this fascination even when they grow up. But what does animation actually mean? Animation is series of still images that creates an illusion of movement in the viewers mind. When live action cinema is captured to film due to filming technology, movement is divided to series of still images. Those frames are stitched together to create sense of movement in viewers mind. In animation, no initial movement exists. Animators create and line up pictures that will create the illusion of movement. Instead of re-producing movement, animation creates it. Anima, translated from latin, means “the breath of life”. (Pikkov 2010, 14)

There are two types of animated films. two-dimensional and three-dimensional animation. Both consists of two dimensional pictures, but in 3D animation the pictures are projections of three dimensional objects, that are made with computers or, for example, as animated dolls. 2D-animation can include such techniques as hand-drawn animation, cut-outs, silhouettes, sand animation and direct animation etc. (Pikkov 2010, 20) In this thesis I will concentrate on hand-drawn 2D-animation.

Hand-drawn animation is most common and widespread type of animation. Today the animators either draw sequences of images on paper and scan them to computer or draw them completely with computer software. With computer software, the images are layered with color and backgrounds. Before modern computers, individual frames had to be painted on clear sheets of celluloid. These sheets were then laid on top of separately painted backgrounds and filmed with camera. (Pikkov 2010, 19)

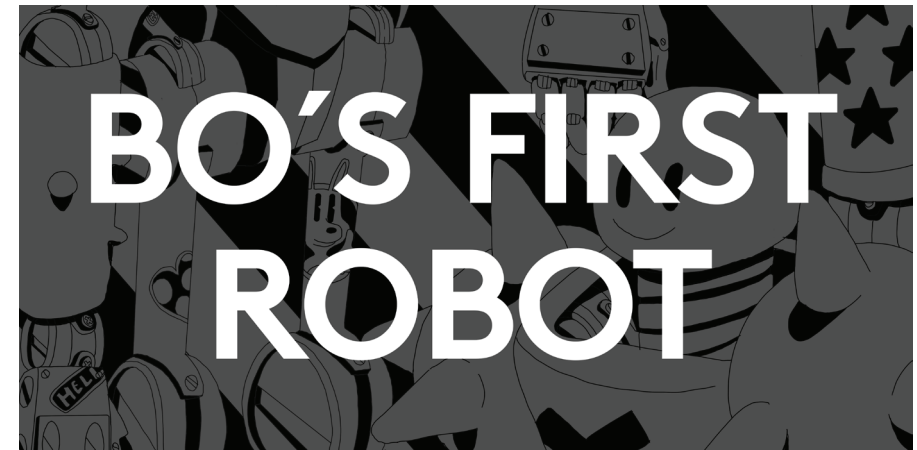
Bo's First Robot

I did everything, except composed the song that is played in the animation.

**DIRECTOR, CONCEPT, ANIMATOR,
SOUND DESIGN, BACKGROUND ART:**
Jenna Seikkula

MUSIC:
Alex Bala
<http://freemusicarchive.org/music/Plurabelle/>

VIMEO LINK:
<https://vimeo.com/201197789>

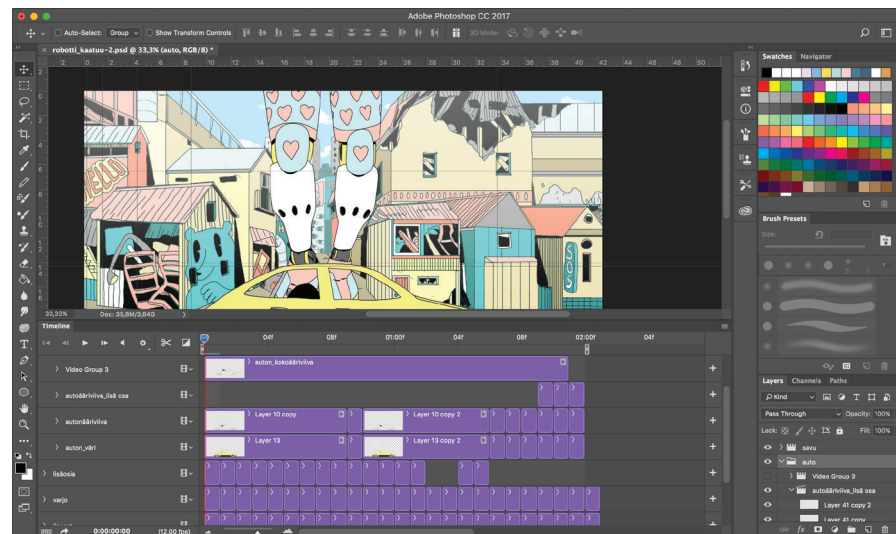


The artistic production

My artistic production is short animation called Bo's First Robot. It's a short story about character named Bo a mechanic who is trying to finish her first big robot. Something goes wrong and Bo loses the control over the robot. Animation's climax is when she has to run for her life and the robot collapses on top of her hiding place.

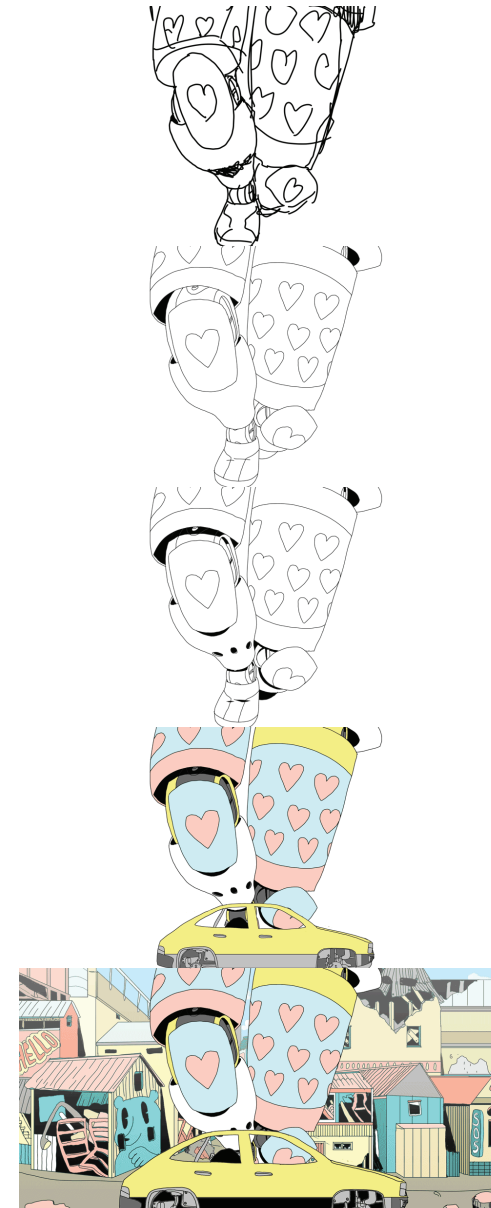
The animation is made in frame-by-frame technique with 10 frames per second. Everything is done with computer by using Photoshop. It's the same technique as in hand drawn animation but instead of paper I draw straight to computer by using Wacom tablet.

Photoshop has really competent animation tools and many animators like Charles Huettner uses it. There is onion skins and timeline functions and the whole of Photoshop tools for you to use.



Photoshop timeline

Animating Process



1. Rough sketch of the movement

2. Clean up

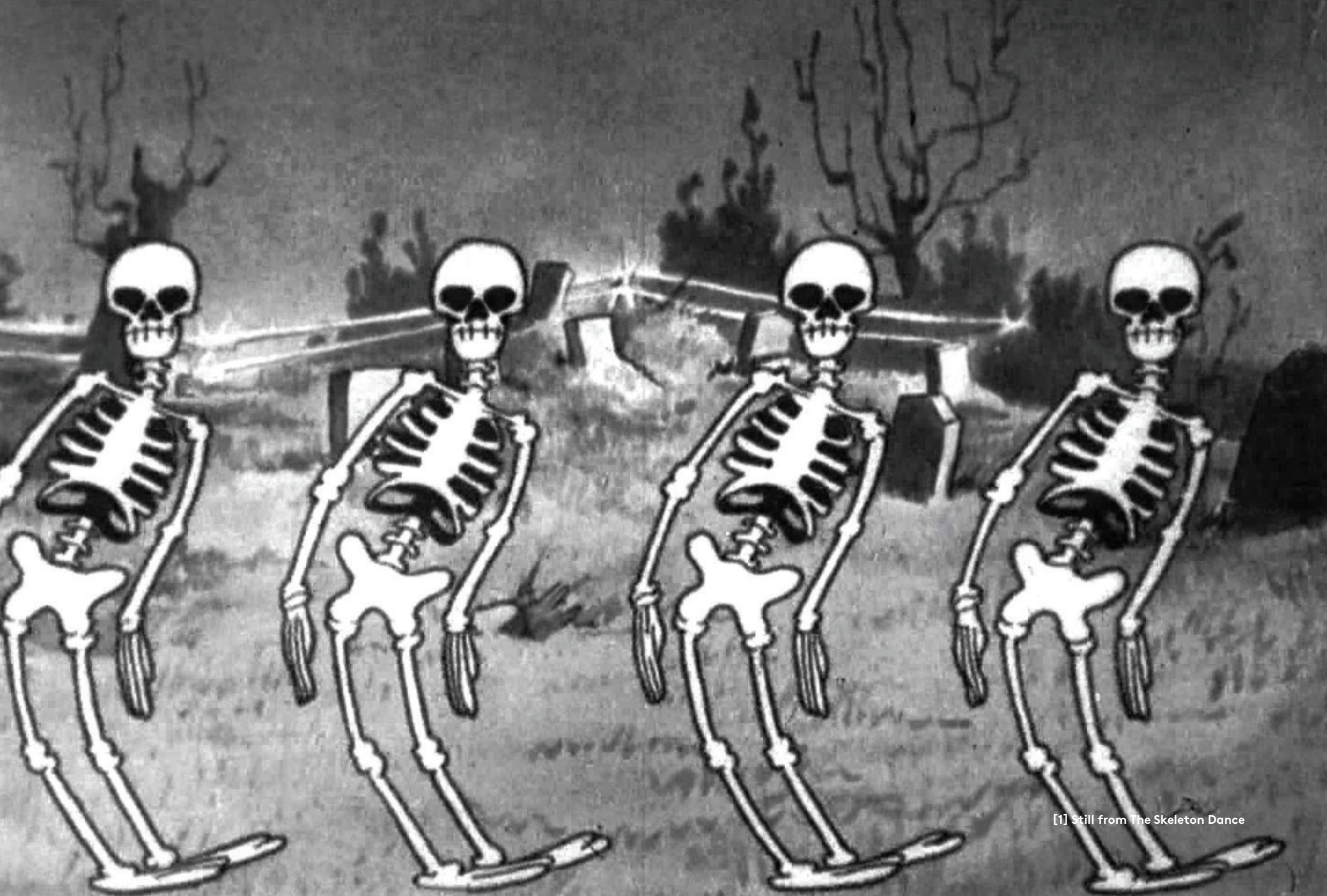
3. Shadows

4. Color added

5. Background

INFLUENCES

- Inspiration
- History
- Disney
- Robot animation
- Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli
- World around Bo
- Akira
- Tekkonkrinkreet
- Short animation
- Gobelins, the school of visual communication



[1] Still from The Skeleton Dance

Inspiration

“People I meet randomly in the street usually inspire me. I am very observant and I often imagine situations when I see something or someone. It’s like dreaming awake. I’m also very influenced by all kinds of cultural expression, whether that is cinema, comics, painting and contemporary art. I do think it’s very important to keep an eye open on everything relative to the picture, technically as well as visually.” (Selby 2009, 61)

We get inspired and influenced by many things. In the book *Animation in progress* Andrew Selby has interviewed animators about their animation and what kind of working methods they have. One of his question to animators was about influence and inspiration. The things that inspired animators ranged from nature, light, shadow and people to art and other animators. Just about everything can inspire, you just have to keep your eyes open. (Selby 2009)

In creative fields it’s common to take visual benchmarks as examples to aim for. In my first animation the benchmarks and inspirations were from all over the place, and that led to five unfinished projects and finally to one finished project. As an illustrator I have stronger understanding of my direction and what I’m able to do than I have as an animator. Creating a style that fits to my illustration and animation skills was difficult task. When your illustration is good but the movement is not, the good illustration only highlights the faults in animation. As was discussed before on basics of aesthetics essay, the coherence is very important. For example, hyper-realistic character design needs life like movement, while South park -style animation can settle with an animation that is just as crude as the character design.

History

I have narrowed down my key points in history and what I found most interesting in considering my own stylistic choices and what inspired me with Bo’s first robot.

William McCay, the creator of the popular comic strip *Nemo in Slumberland*, was the first man to try develop animation as an art form. He got inspired by flip books which his young son brought home. He made 4000 animated drawings of little Nemo. These were a big hit when flashed on the screen at Hammerstein’s theatre in New York in 1911. In the 1914 McCay drew Gertie the dinosaur and performed live with the dinosaur and offered an apple to Gertie who swallowed it whole. Gertie was the first animated “personality”. This was the beginning of individuality in cartoon. It was so lifelike that the audience could identify with Gertie. (Williams 2001, 24)

In his later years McCay didn’t like the way animation was going. He lashed out to the new generation of funny-cartoon animators by saying that he had created a new art form and they took it and made it into a money-making business.

In the nineteen twenties, Felix the cat became just as popular as Charlie Chaplin. These animations were inventive and they could do things that camera couldn’t. But the most important thing about the animation was that Felix himself had a personality and this connected with an audience worldwide. (Williams 2001, 25)

Disney

The Felix cartoons led straight to the arrival of Disney. *The Steamboat Willie*, the debut of Mickey Mouse was published with synchronised sound in 1928. For the first time animation had synchronised musical score. Followed by *The Skeleton Dance*, which was the first of the Silly Symphony animated series. In the year 1934 Walt Disney announced *The Snow White*, the first feature length animated movie at The New York Times. Snow White had a budget of 250 000 dollars, ten times of a regular Silly Symphony cartoon. The production took only three years and the movie was released in 1937. The Movie was 83 minutes long and pushed animation to the level of art. The legend has it that some of the artist booked themselves to hospital in advance because of the efforts they put into making the movie in time.

The success of Snow White helped to build the foundation for the golden age of animation. This consists of movies like Pinocchio, Dumbo, Bambi and Fantasia, as well as Silly Symphonies, Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse shorts. (Williams 2001, 17)

Robot Animation

The early Disney and the simplistic shapes and the strong contrasts of black and white has influenced my aesthetics sense and it shows in the posters and stickers used in Bo's First Robot. This time period was also big influence to Osamu Tezuka, the creator of *Astro Boy*.

In Japan, at the beginning of 1960's, technology and economy was developing at a fast pace. Televised animation arrived to Japan in January 1 of 1963 when Astro Boy's first 30 minutes were broadcast. It was instant success and marked the start for a mass-produced televised animation in Japan. Influenced by the Astro Boy, the TV series *Tetsujin 28-go* started, based on a comic book by Mitsuteru Yokoyama. It starred a young protagonist who piloted a robot by

remote control. These robot animations were reflecting the rebuilding of Japan. Tokyo was changing rapidly, wooden buildings were pulled down and gravel roads were covered with asphalt. Tokyo was transforming to Metropolis of concrete. These early robot anime were influenced by the modern day folklore of scientific potential. It was the perfect match for the times. (Mediag)

The early robot animation is my main inspiration. I like the softness and childlike design of this period. The naive belief of the future and technology when everything is new and amazing. I tried to capture that feeling with bright colors and smiling faces.

Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli

In 1978 show called *Future Boy Conan* aired on television. The crew behind this series included the directorial debut of Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata and the creator of Gundam anime Yoshiyuki Tomino. The anime is placed on a post-apocalyptic world, where humankind is in a threat of extinction. The story follows the survivors of the devastating war between two nations and follows the love between Conan and Lana. Even though the series didn't receive good ratings, this show consisted the themes and story elements Miyazaki would continue to explore throughout his career. (Wikipedia)

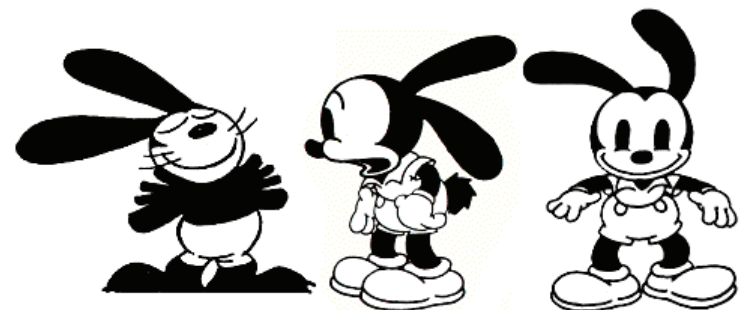
In 1985, after the success of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata and producer Toshio Suzuki decided to found Studio Ghibli. Some of their most notable films are *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle*. (Wikipedia)

What makes Ghibli so great? Is it the fact that their movies star female characters are more than just love interests? Or the imaginative settings these characters live in? Or the way they gives time for the audience to take in the scenery? Or the small details in the characters that make them feel lifelike?

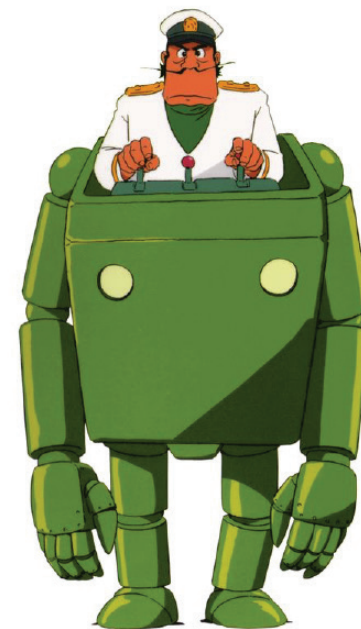


First picture of Bo in her final desing. In Bo's First Robot the shadows are black which resonates with strong contrast of retro animation. In addition to old black and white animation Bo's First Robot has personalized colors.

[2] Early Disney character Oswald the Rabbit, Playfulness and character design acrhitypes are seen in Bo's face and in background art.



[3] Page from manga Astro boy or in Japanese Captain Atom. Robot designs and face design



[4] Even if I didn't use drivable robots in final animation the first character designs were inspired by Future Boy Conan

The Miyazaki method of working is that there is no script. He works on his storyboard while the animators work on his vision. This working way is probably only possible for Miyazaki, and animators working alone. The free flow of Miyazaki's thought process is visible in his film and they feel less formulaic than most of the films today. For me this free flow of storytelling is the most intriguing thing about Miyazaki's films. (Midnighteye)

World around Bo

Character design and the robot design might be influenced by the animations before the year 1980 but the world around her is not. World where Bo lives resembles more like world of *Bladerunner* after the nuclear war. Even if Miyazaki movies and series tackled the subject of crisis and building new life after devastation, his world-view is too whimsical and full of hope for my taste.

Akira

Akira, a Japanese animated cyberpunk film from 1988 was directed by Katsuhiro Otomo and written by Otomo and Izo Hashimoto. The screenplay is based on Otomo's manga *Akira*. It's considered one of the greatest animated science fiction movies of all time. (Wikipedia)

With the lead of such animators like Hiroyuki Okiura, famous from his ultra realistic animation, *Akira* was a game changer. The whole of 1980's was culminating to *Akira*. The economic bubble of Japan was at its peak and studios wanted to have bigger and better projects to work on. Every scene of the movie is planned and produced in the same amount of time as one episode of its contemporary anime series. This is explained by the record breaking budget of 1.1 billion yen (8 million dollars). (Askmen) Even if *Akira* did well in the box office, the Japanese economic bubble was just about to burst and in a way (Thebubblebubble) *Akira* was part of the crash of animation

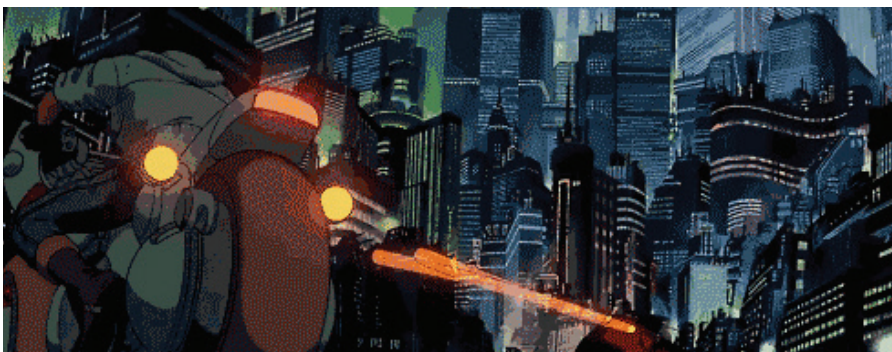
industry in the beginning of 1990. It took until year 1995 – when Mamoru Oshii *Ghost in the Shell* came out – to industry fully recover from the crash. (Youtube)

Akira was culmination of a decade of experimenting and a visual landmark for many animations to come. This movie made me understand that animation is not always meant for children. The world of *Akira* is dystopian cyberpunk society where gang violence is on the rise and government is doing human experimentations with children. The neon signs and dirty alleyways of Neo Tokyo has made ever lasting impression in my mind.

Tekkonkrinkreet

Animation film *Tekkonkrinkreet*, based on Taiyō Matsumoto's manga and directed by Michael Arias, was produced by company called Studio 4°C. The animation project started when future director Michael Arias started practicing with computer graphics and this visual was discovered by the animator Koji Morimoto. With team of visual director Wilson Tang, animation supervisor Lee Fulton and team of 12 people, they decided to do five-minute long pilot. Which was later turned into a full length movie. (Animenetwork)

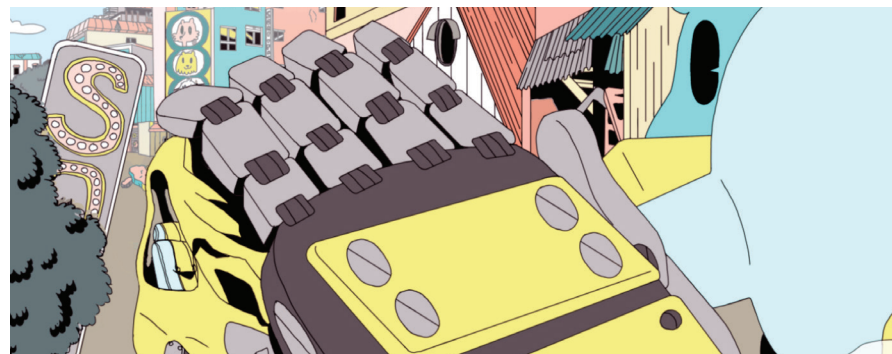
The thing that makes *Tekkonkrinkreet* great is the usage of 3D. Camera is freed from constraints and it can move freely in the world. Shinji Kimura, a background artist who has worked in movies like *Akira* and *Steamboy* was responsible for one of the most beautiful background art I have ever seen. In the world where two orphan kids are fighting against Yakuza, it makes a powerful contrast when little children's playgrounds and colorful wallpaintings are used as background for horrible violence.



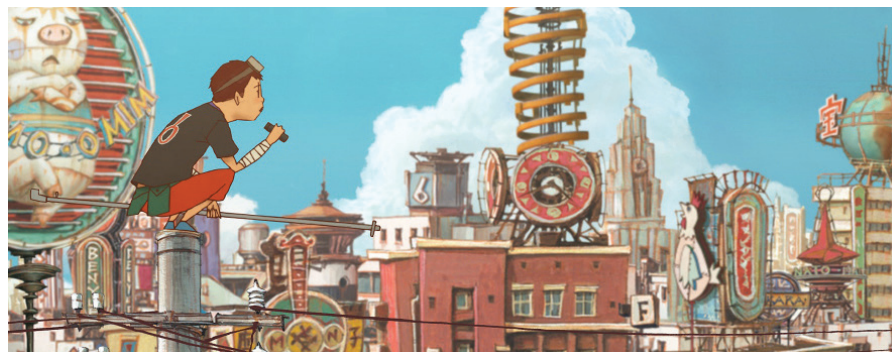
Alleyway from Bo's First Robot. Posters and dirt as main background visuals.

[5] Alleyway from Akira. Darker and dirtier colors. Main visual elements posters, stickers and dirt.

[6] City skyline from Akira.



Scene from Bo's First Robot where posters, graffiti and neon lights are visible.



[7] Tekkonkinkreet Backgrounds are more colorful than in Akira. Dirt, stickers and posters are visible.

[8] Neon signs are more fun than in Akira. I wanted to have that lighthearted feelin to my own animation.

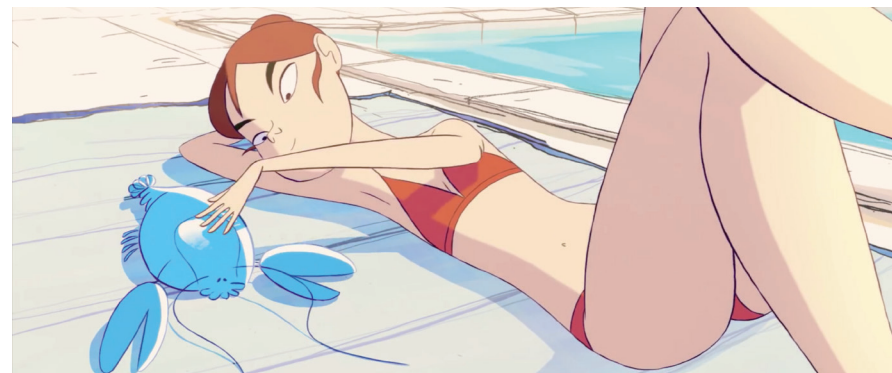
Short animation

While most of my references and inspirations are from major animation studios and big budget films, I am not an animation studio. I am only one person doing everything by myself: directing, key-framing, in-betweening, coloring, background art and sound design. To understand what is possible to achieve with my resources, I also needed projects of the same caliber for reference.

Gobelins, the school of visual communication

Gobelins is a Parisian school of the visual arts. It's best known of its Animation department, which Pierre Ayma founded in 1975. Since then students of Gobelins have gone working to leading animation studios like Disney and Warner Bros. Every year they are participating Annecy animation Festival, where their second year students show their one-minute animated works at the beginning of every movie. These short animations have given me a standard where to aspire. (Wikipedia)

Gobelins animations are student works and the creators are around my age. I enjoy how they work together to create something amazing. Animation is something where it's hard to keep up the quality of work when working alone. It's lovely to see what groups of student can achieve when people can focus on their strong points.



[9] *Le Dernier Jour D'un Condamné*,
Graduation project 2015

[11] *Oh shit!* Fake trailer made by Gobelins students 2014

[10] *Wildfire* Graduation project 2015

IDEA DEVELOPMENT

- Slow start
- 2015
- Pixstrories
- Pee Break
- Girl and Alien

The slow start

The time people use on projects varies depending if the project is for customer or to satisfy the artists own creative need. People can use up years for their own passion projects like animator Robert Seidel who said in his interview: *“It surely took my whole life to be able to create *grau* as things I learned and experienced went into the making. That’s something people tend to forget.”* (Selby 2009, 125) On the other hand, when animator Motomichi Nakamura was commissioned to work on a music video for the band called The Knife, he finished his project in only 2 months. (Selby 2009, 50) Like I have stated before, I had difficulty to narrow down what I wanted to do. In this chapter I am going through the different steps I took before finally settling down with my concept and style.

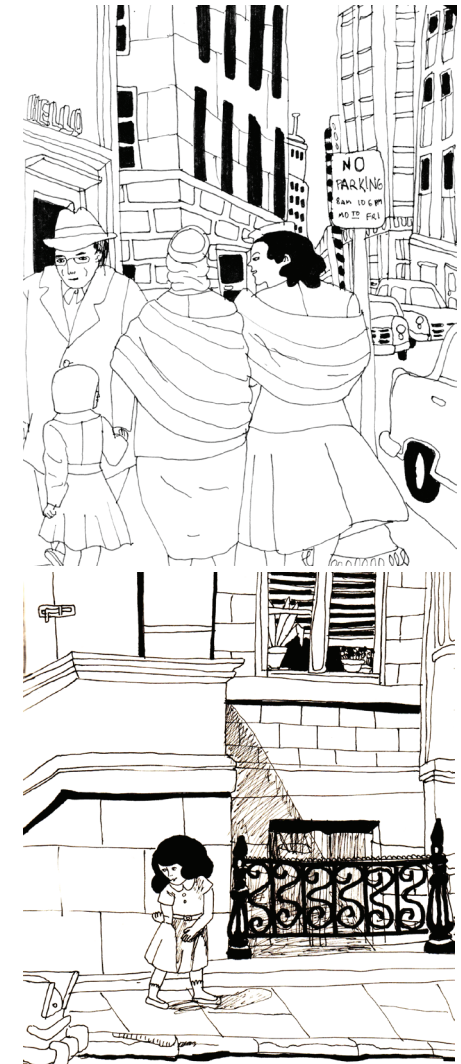
2015

In the first year of my studies in masters I started to get interested in animation. My main influence at the time was studio Ghibli and it shows in my project that I did for the storytelling course.

My first story was about a little boy who falls in love with a statue. It contained long cuts of static wide shots. Idea of important details wasn’t there yet. I mostly wanted to go with visuals and not with what is needed for good storytelling. In the storyboard the relationships of the boy and the statue stayed too unclear. I wasn’t able to answer questions: Why did the boy fall in love with the statue? What was the boys and his mother’s (another character in the story) relationship? My failure in this project had to do with my inner conflicts of this style. I was looking for my voice as an animator and even if the stills looked visually appealing I believed that it resembled too much Ghibli’s style and not what I wanted to create on my own. These unanswered questions and the conflicted motives of what style I want to do, were the reasons why I never continued this project beyond this point.



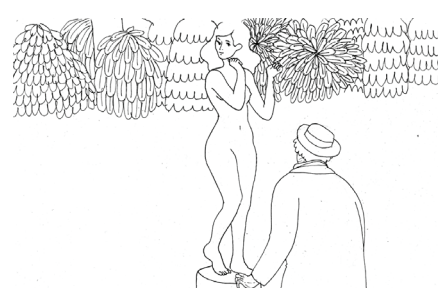
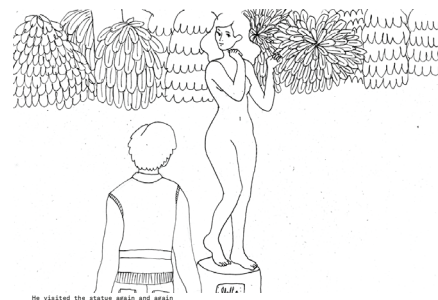
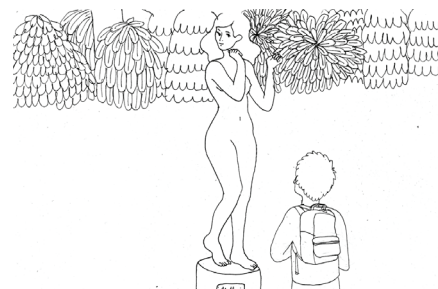
Idea sketch done for storytelling class in 2014, Boys clothing is too modern for the final style.

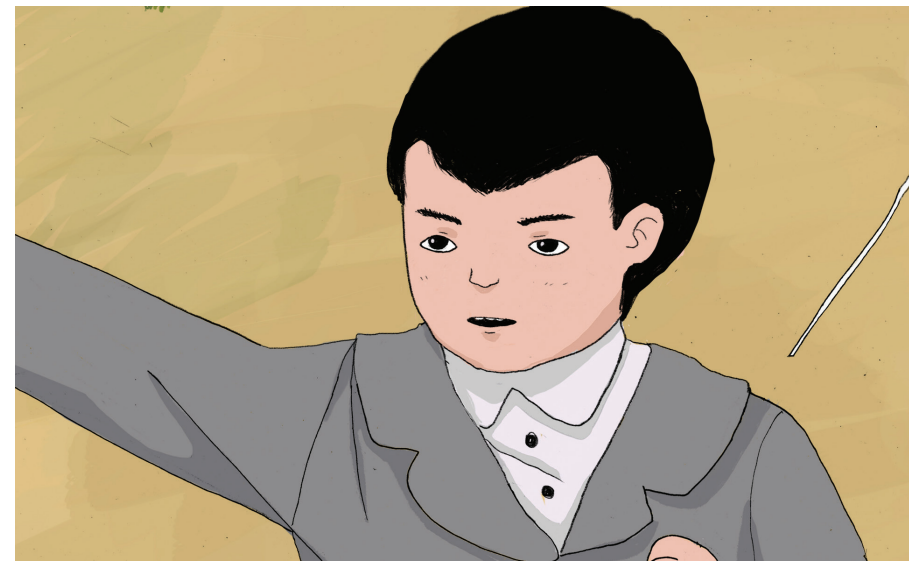


General feeling and study of 1950's New York, 2015 January.

Study for style. Practicing perspective and building study, 2015 January.

Storyboard Boy and Statue





Finished stills from the Boy and the statue themed animation.

Pixstories

I started an academic minor called Pixstories, which focused on animation and visual storytelling. First 5 months I did a lot of research on style and different storyboards and animation tests on what I wanted to do. Most important decision I made in this period was applying for exchange to Tamabi university and study animation there.

Next project I started to make was about a girl who is questioning her reality after she drops keys that never hit the floor. I had just watched series of short animations called *The Animatrix* and specially one called *Beyond*, there is a glitch in the world and weird things start happening there, until a group of agents come and fix things. The Problem with this idea was that I started to think different types of details, but character motives and why is anything happening never get past the first stages of development. Later I saw short animation called *Ohayo* by Satoshi Kon which had same type of idea but better execution.



Style test after first workshop
in Pixstories.

Pee Break

Third project was started with animation style test and even animatic sketch. It was about a girl trying to find a bathroom in a city environment. I finished a style test for this idea, and it was in some way the starting point for what ended up being the style for my final animation.

I drew the picture of a girl at the street in November and by the end of the next month I drew a picture of a girl sitting in a metro with robotic arm. I didn't like the picture too much but I liked the robotic arm and its visual style. At the time I got the invitation to study in Japan, and the following month I only drew robots and anime girls.



First Picture of girl with robot arm.



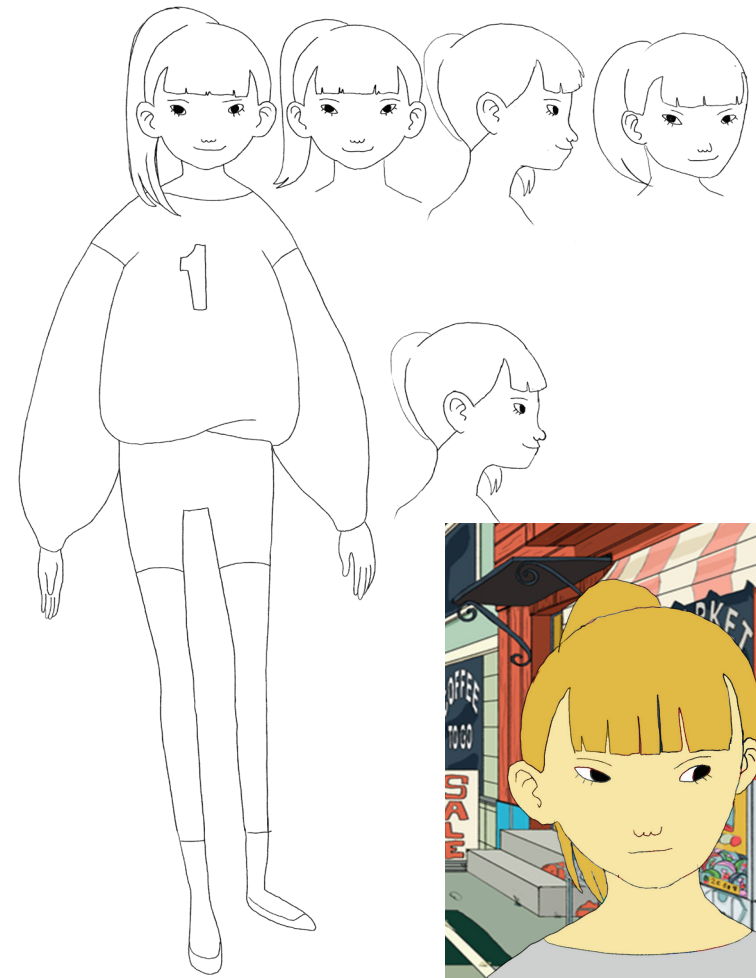
Finalized character and background concept art for Pee Break animation.



Concept sketches, 2015 November.



First sketch of the girl from 2015 October.

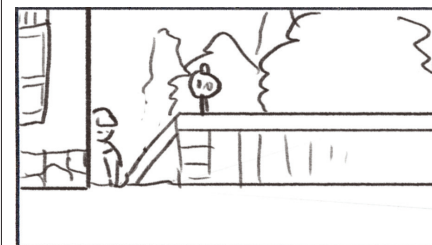
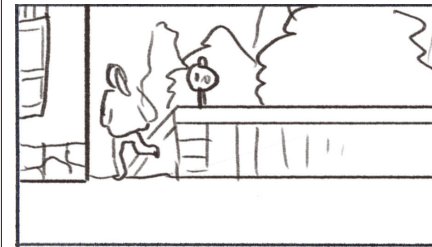
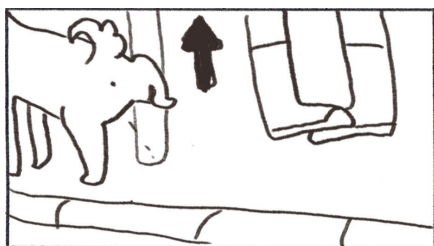
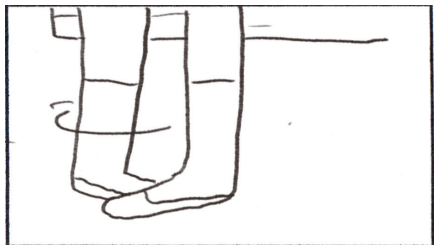
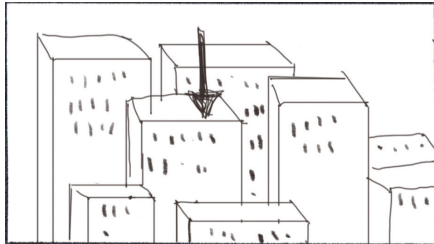


Finalized character sheet with head turn around.



Still from test animation.

Storyboard Pee Break

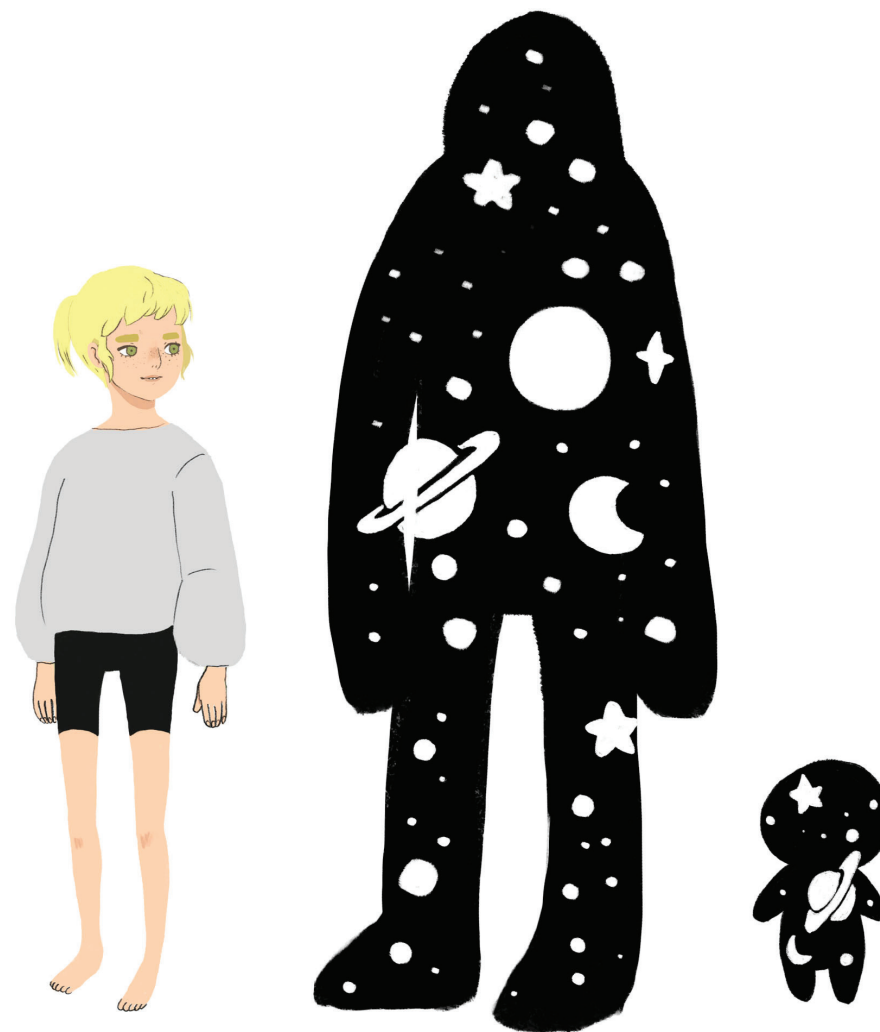


Girl and Alien

I wasn't sure if I could animate such complex things as my robots, so I pushed them aside and started once more new project. Girl and alien, animation that I produced furthest. The animatic had the same problem as the first project. The visual narrative was unclear: long and mostly wide shots. I promised the teachers that I would finish Girl and Alien project and be happy about it, but robots kept on pushing out of my head. When in Japan professor Nomura wanted me to start new project I ditched Girl and Alien animation without hesitation.

What went wrong?

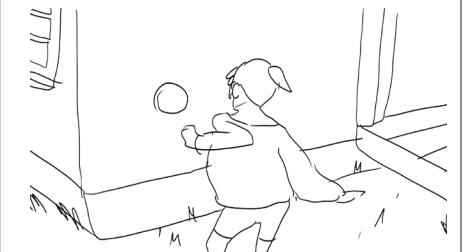
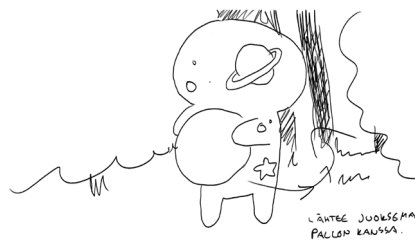
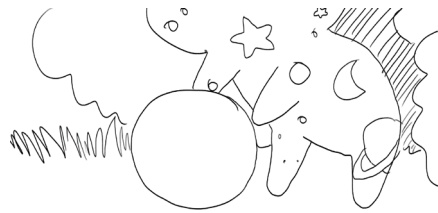
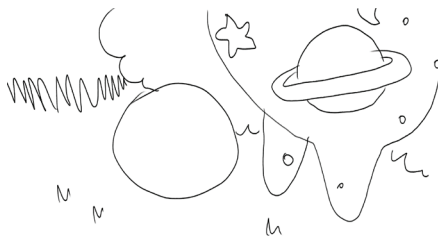
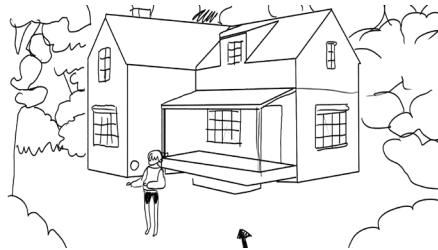
My problem in Pixstories was that I had too many ideas to work with and it took too much time to develop them to see if they had any potential. For the next projects I need to do faster prototyping and test out how the ideas work. Most important thing is that I should learn to trust my gut feeling. When I started to draw pictures of robots and started to feel the urge to do something with them I should have trusted that instinct and not to use a lot of time for another doomed project.

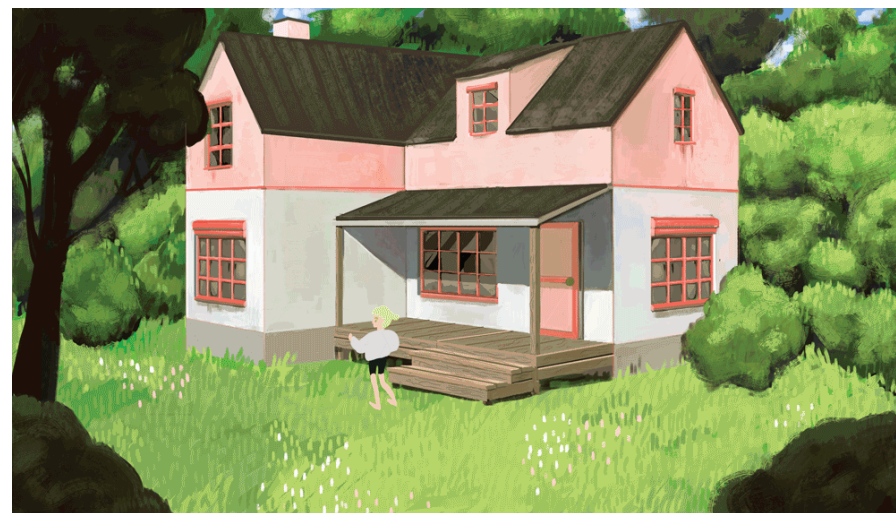


Girl and the alien character designs. Girl is same as in the previous animation idea, but the lineart is left out.

Aliens were just tear in the Universe. I had 3D models for these characters.

Storyboard Girl and Alien





I animated first five scenes from the animation while I was doing the storyboard for Bo's First Robot. These backgrounds and stills are from that unfinished material

PRODUCTION

- Tokyo
- Character animation
- Key image
- Setting
- Sketches
- Concept art
- Storyboard, Animatic and animation comparison

Tokyo

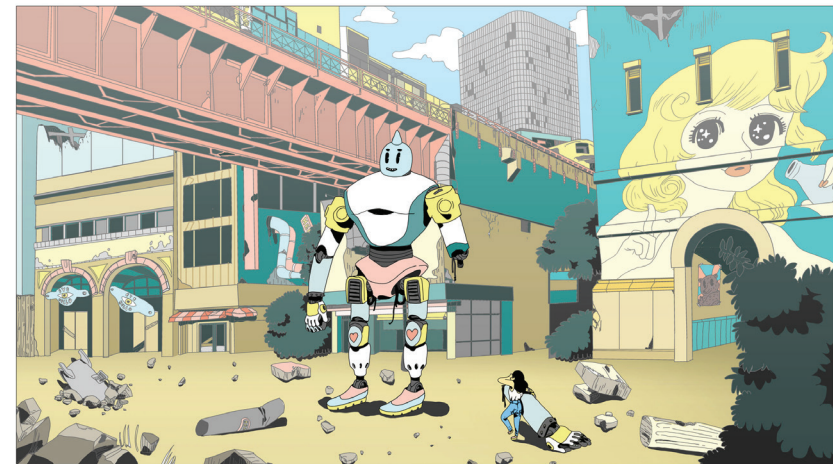
Bo's First Robot was slowly developing in the background, I just didn't have the courage to animate such complex robots at first. This changed when exchange trip to Tokyo began and professor Nomura wanted me to start new project in Tamabi.

In Tamabi there were two animation courses that I had to take. Professor Nomura wanted me to do two concepts to choose from. First assignment was a character based animation, where the idea of the animation comes from the character. Second assignment was an animation based on a one sentence. We mixed and matched sentences for the short animation.

First option was Bo's First Robot.

Second option was Lontamer.

After two concepts, I had to choose which one I am going to finish. Because robots at this point had become some sort of passion project, I chose to do Bo's First Robot animation. While deciding the visual world of Bo, I did a lot of illustrations and sketches. Project was started with creating rules for the character in a form of a character sheet.



Lontamer concept art done in Japan

Bo's First Robot first concept art.

Character animation

You start off by filling a “character sheet”, almost like a page from a children’s friendship book. You describe what your character is like, what is their purpose, who are their friends, etc. Then draw your character.

CHARACTER’S NAME:

Bo Fig

**PERSONALITY/CHARACTER
IN A NUTSHELL:**

Naive, bold and brave

RECENT GOAL:

To build a robot

SPECIES:

Human

GENDER:

Female

AGE:

30

RESIDENCE:

Warehouse where she builds robots

**GOOD THING ABOUT
CHARACTER/ADVANTAGE:**

Genius, imaginative and funny.

BAD THING/SHORTCOMING:

Impatient and rash

HABITS:

Picking up electronics, taking them a part and building them again.

HOBBIES:

Building robots and reading books

FAVOURITE THING:

Long bath and violence

WORST THING/DISLIKES:

Violence

FRIENDS:

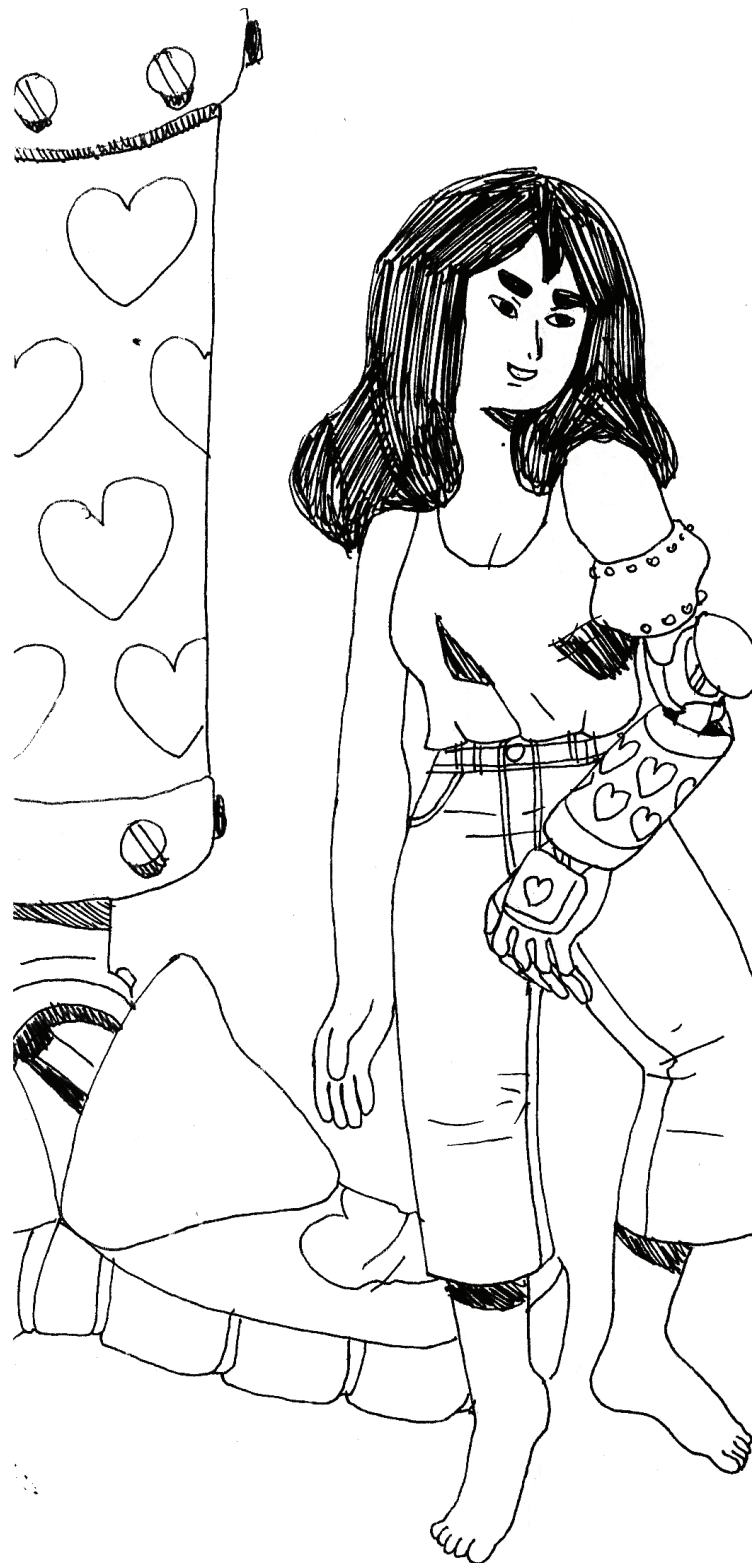
Greta the robot driver

MOTTO:

It’s alive

DREAMS:

To be the best robot builder



Key image

Next step was to put her in her environment, and make a key frame of the animation. In this frame you introduce the color scheme and the main action of the animation. What kind of world would have giant robots? Why are they there? What do you want to tell with your story? These kind of questions need to be answered before the animation can be started.

Storyboard was revised constantly with help from Professor Nomura. He was really good at pointing out mistakes that would make a viewer to lose track of what was happening. For four weeks we did once a week check-up on the storyboard. On my case I started to work on animatic quite early. It made me understand better how long is the animation going to be. It also made easier to fix continuity errors.

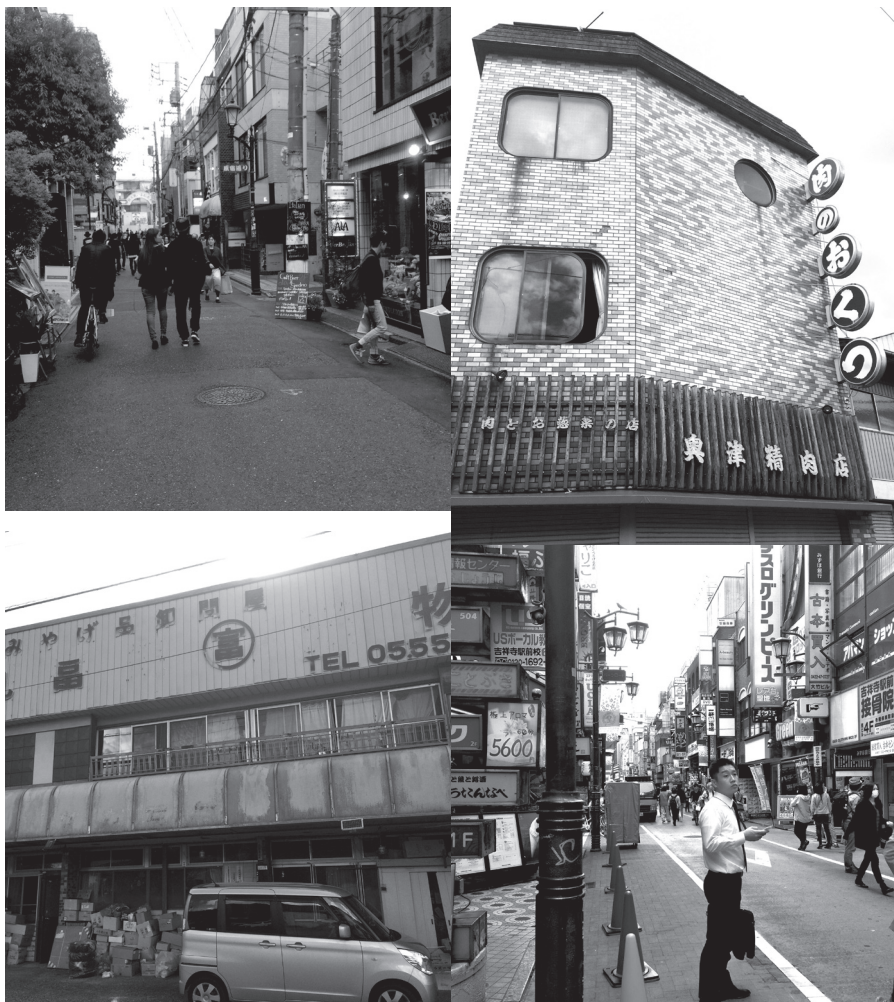
At first the animation was supposed to be only 30 seconds long. But as the course progressed and the animatic and storyboard evolved, the length was finally up to 90 seconds. Because first time goal, many details were left out of the storyboard but while working on animatic and then with the actual animation, details were necessary to insert.

Setting

Main inspiration for Bo's world is Tokyo. Colorful neon signs, posters and architecture is all based on Tokyo. Just like Akira and Tekkonkinkreet, her world might be beautiful and colorful but at the same time cruel and unforgiving. To point out this, she has robot arm. She probably lost her original arm during a similar type of accident that is shown in the animation. To create a contrast between the action and the world, colors of the animation are upbeat and build around mint and pink color. Details like the heart pattern in

robots are there to soften the world and make it feel absurd. After the main character, robot and the settings was created. After this it was quite easy to decide what happens to them. From the beginning it was clear that there is going to be a chase, but how does it end? What does the robot use for energy, and how does it move? How can the robot be activated? By answering these questions, the world and the story of the animation developed.

Changing the approach to "setting and characters first" design helped me to answer questions about motives of the characters. Previously many of the stories had stopped developing because I had hard time deciding why something is happening. I believe that this change of perspective helped me to move on with my storytelling.

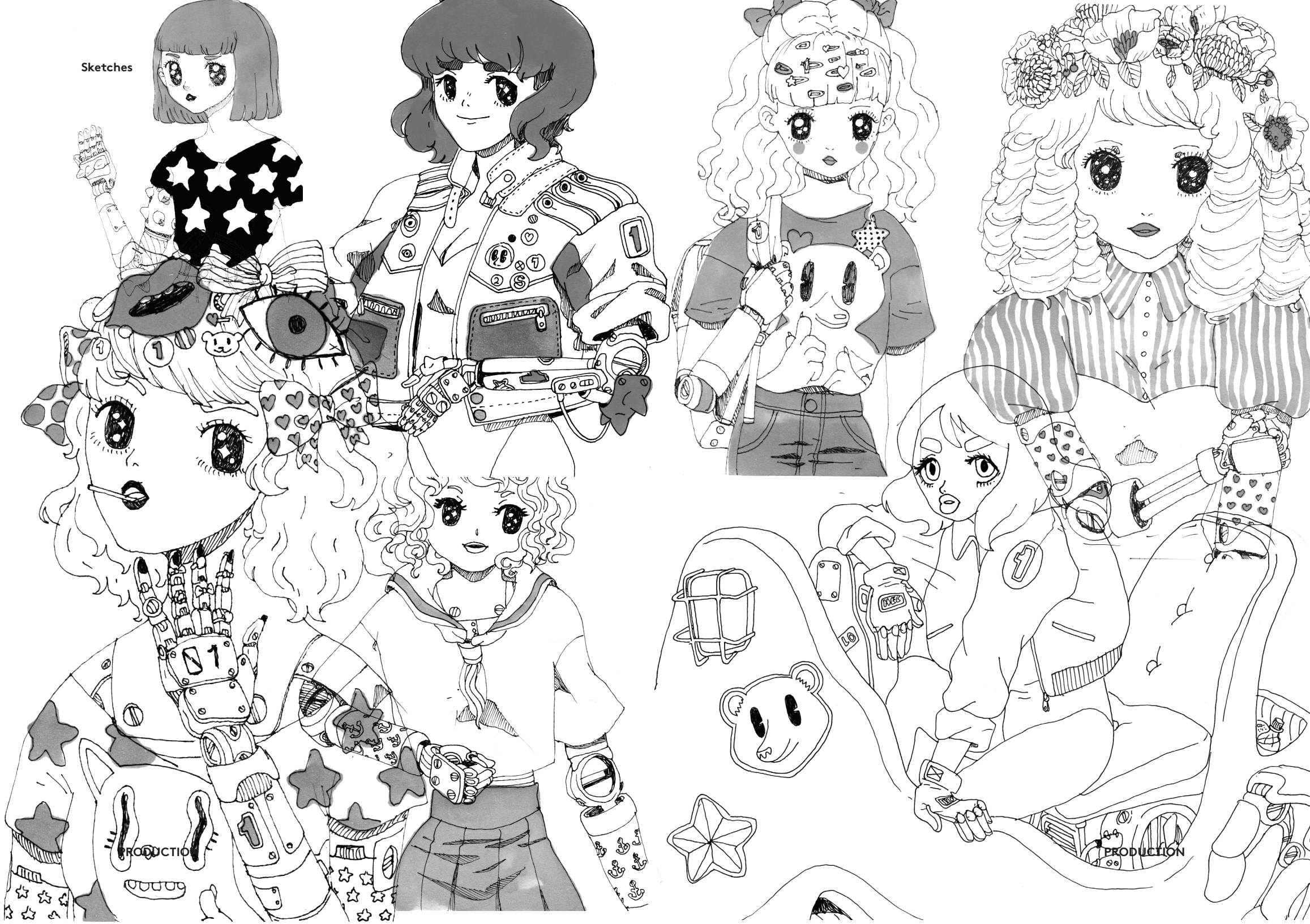


Pictures from Tokyo streets, 2016. The inspiration for movies like Akira and Tekkonkrinkreet.

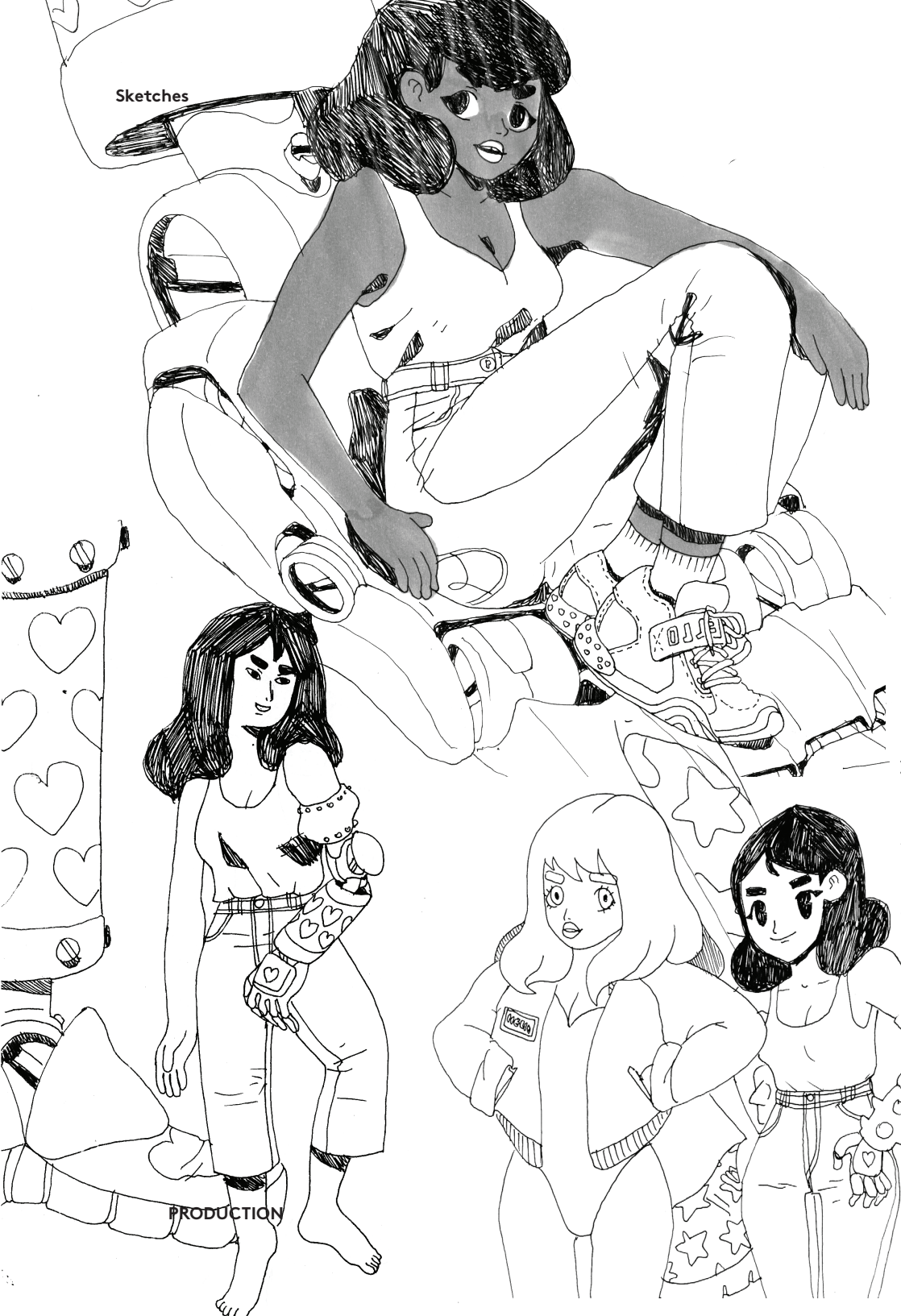


Architecture in Bo's First Robot is influenced by Tokyo streets.

Sketches



Sketches

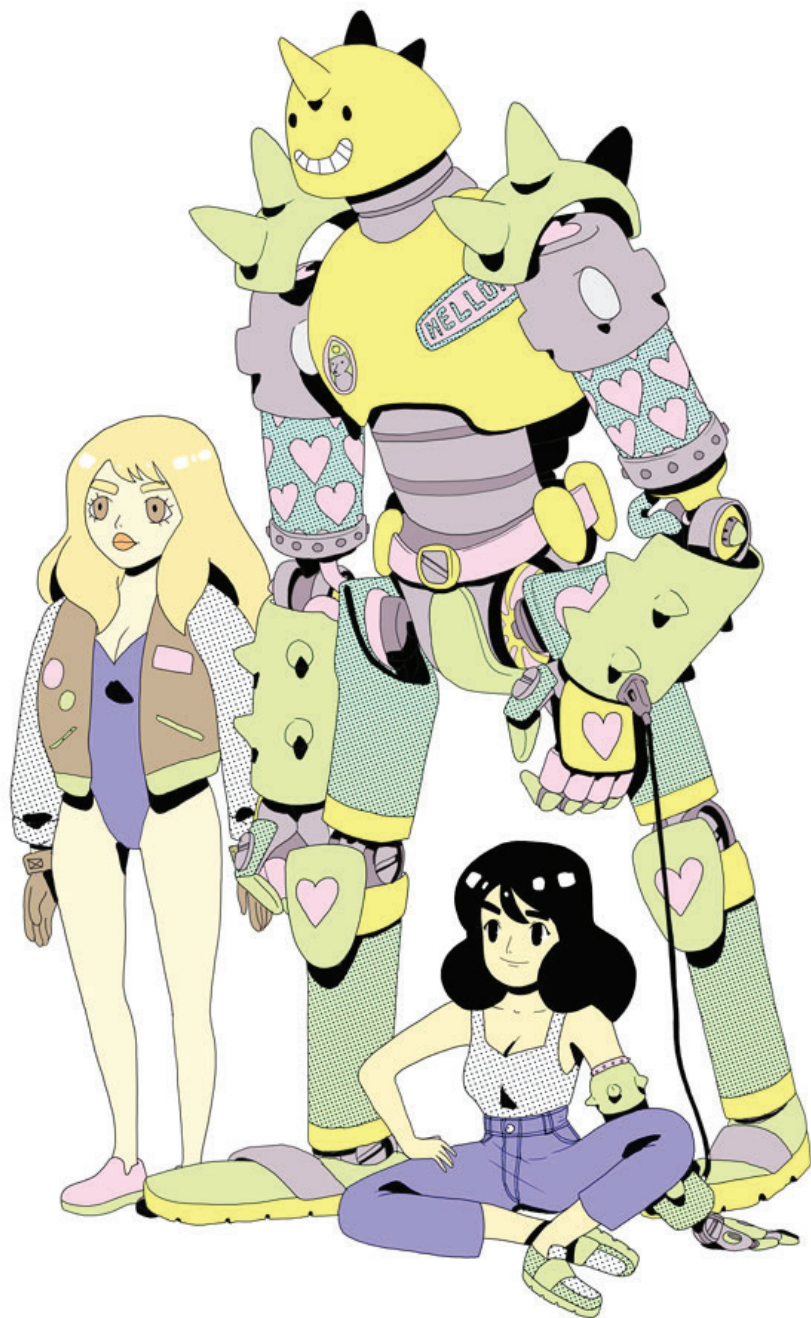


PRODUCTION



PRODUCTION

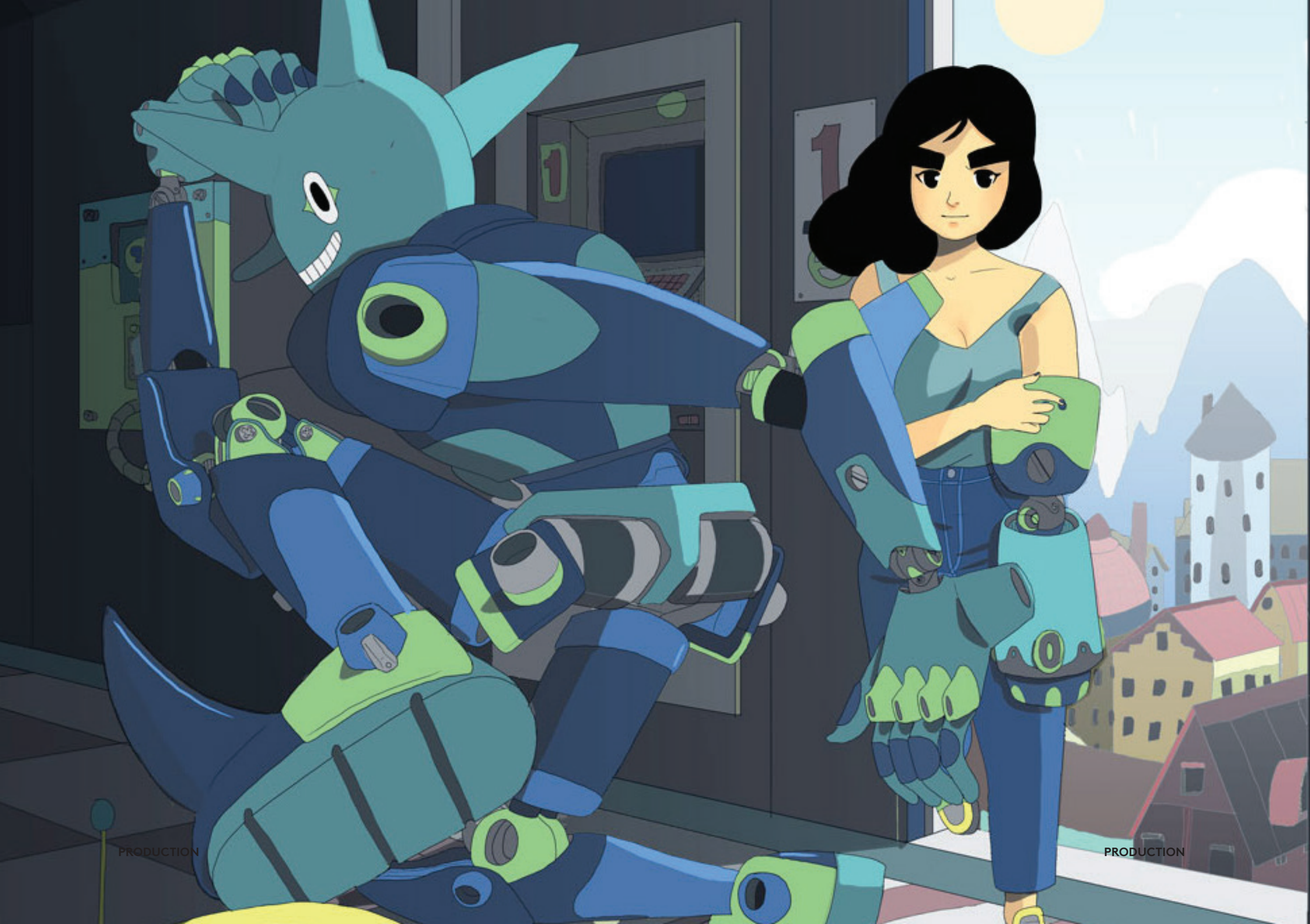
Concept art



PRODUCTION

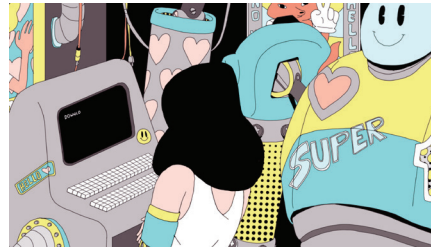
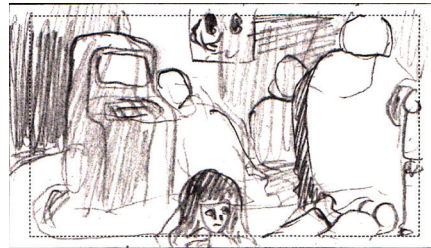
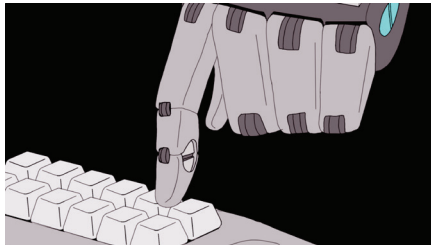
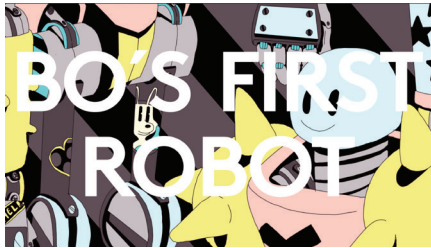
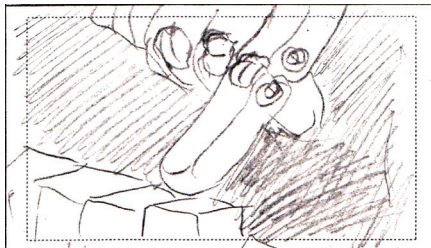


PRODUCTION



PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION



Storyboard

Animatic

Animation

STORYBOARD, ANIMATIC AND ANIMATION COMPARISON

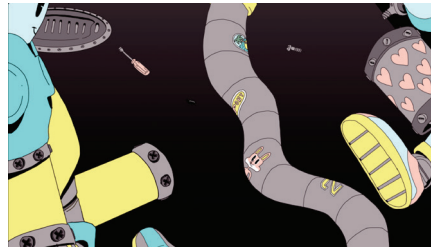
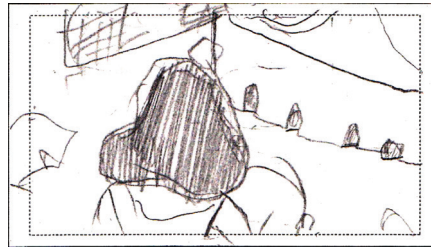
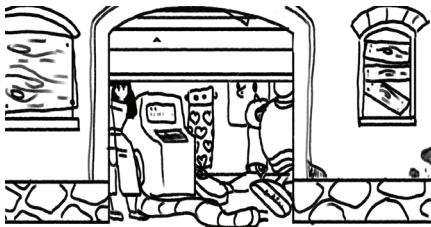
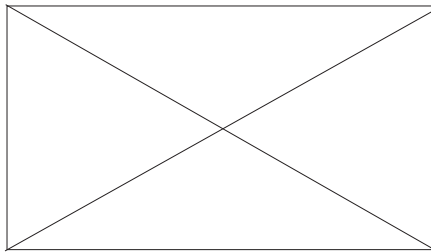
Title Bo's first robot and clues of what is going to happen. In the animatic and storyboard title was absent

In the first shot the robotic hand of Bo is introduced. Computer is turned on.

For me the robotic arm of the titular character is the symbol for trial and error. Something has happened before that made her lose her arm but she has not given up.

In the first storyboard Bo does not wait for the computer to be turned on. By not waiting in front of the computer takes away the build up and the feeling of time passing by. When she was forced to wait, a viewer understands her frustration when the robot doesn't work.

The setting is similar in all versions. But to create suspense, Bo waits with the audience. At first, the viewer does not know what she is doing. Is the robot next to her the one we are implying on the title?



Storyboard

Animatic

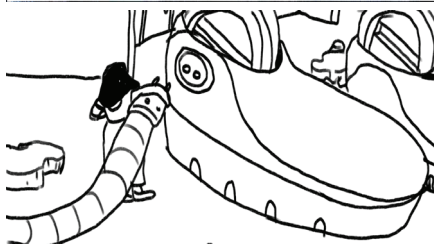
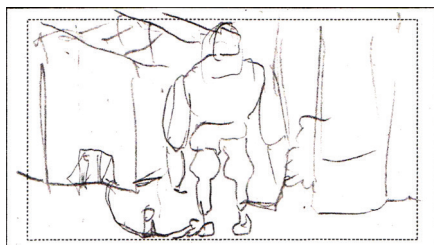
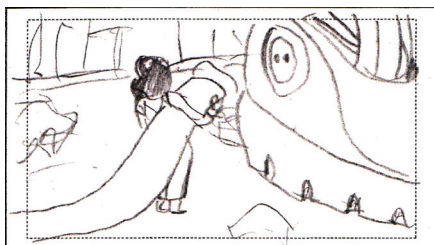
Animation

First idea for the opening shot was to make a long tracking shot behind Bo's back and follow her from the warehouse to the robot outside. After discussion with Professor Nomura this idea was changed to static shots. He thought that camera following the character is too difficult to animate and he did not think it would bring much extra value to the animation.

He was right: by changing the one long tracking shot to two still pieces I could introduce the setting better and showcase the world more.

Door opens and reveals the outside of the Bo's warehouse and gives the first hint of the gigantic robot outside.

By showing more of her unbuild robots and giving a hint of bigger robot outside, more tension is built before the whole scenery is revealed.



Storyboard

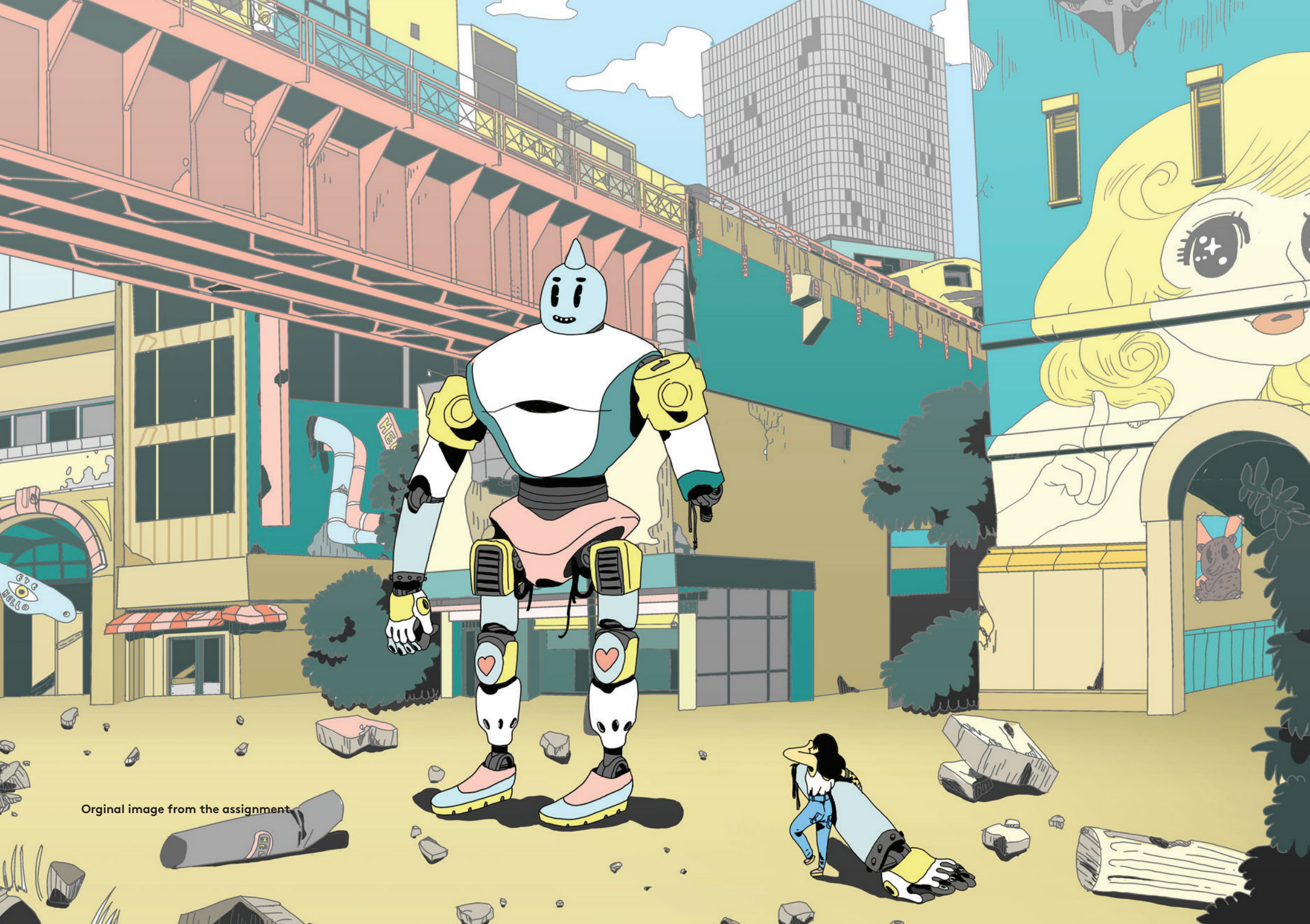
Animatic

Animation

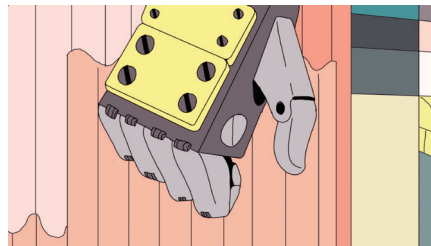
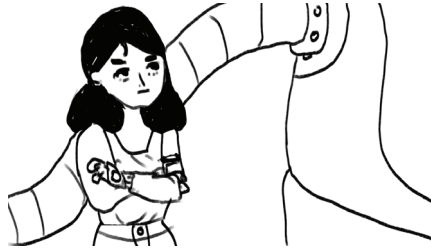
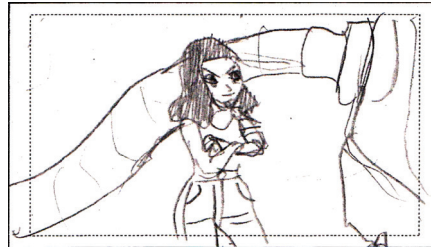
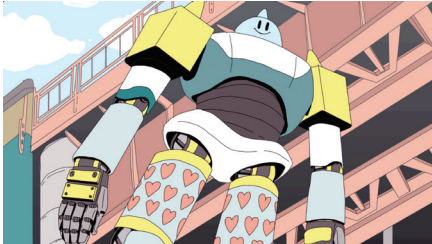
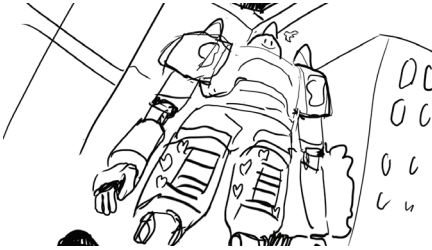
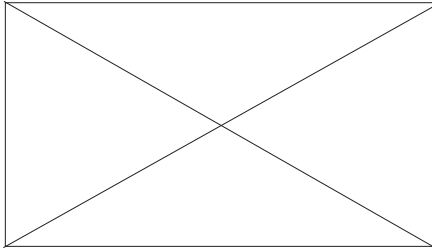
We finally see the whole setting and the robot of the title.

This scene is made from the picture that Professor Nomura assigned us to do, after the characters introduction sheet. We needed to do a key image from the animation. I wanted to challenge my self and do a wide shot of the city with full of details. I had just visited Akihabara, part of Tokyo that is famous of its Otaku culture and French maid cafes. In a way decision to have a wide shot defined the size of the robot. The picture was turned around. Because the robot would have hit its head to the bridge while chasing Bo.

This part of the animation felt boring and too distant. So I added a close up of inserting the plug while I was animating the scene.



Original image from the assignment



Storyboard

Animatic

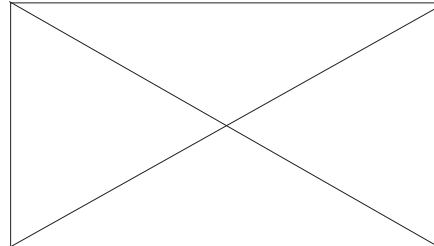
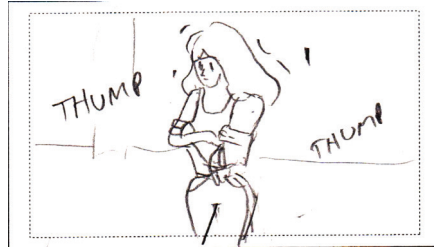
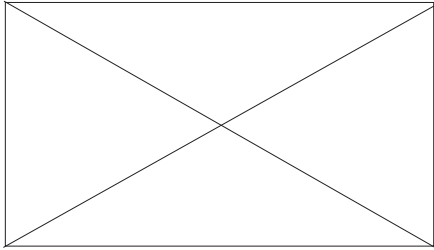
Animation

After discussion with Professor Nomura we decided that scene from Bo's perspective should be added to the animation.

During the production of the animation I came across with a problem concerning the pacing. When showing the animation to people, they didn't understand what was going on. The whole part of the story needed to be re-arranged.

In her character sheet it says that Bo is impatient so I wanted to show that by making her kick the robot first and then to wait.

Still shot of the robot's hand as a visual clue where to return after the robot is turning on.



Storyboard

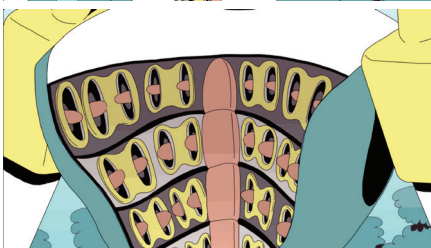
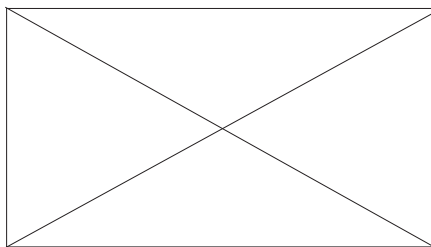
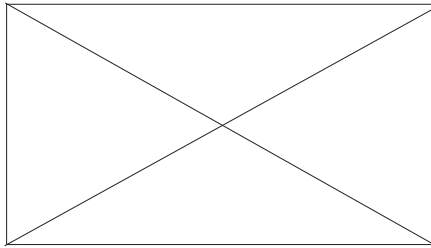
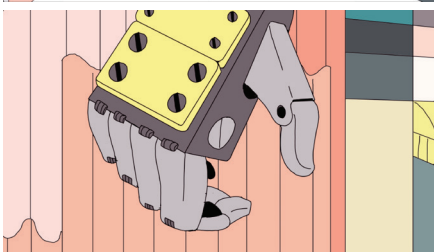
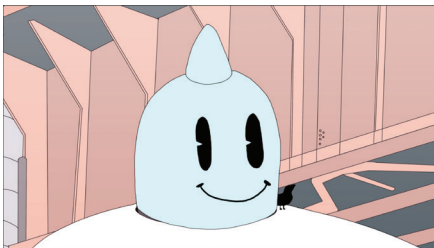
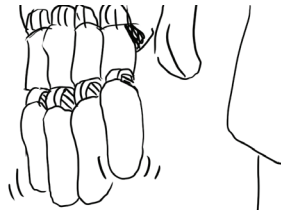
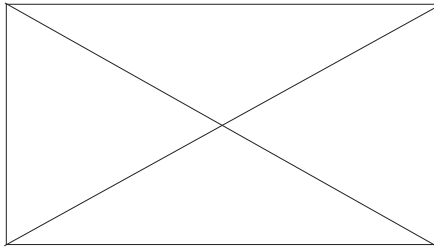
Animatic

Animation

Robot isn't working so she gets frustrated. Bo has moved in front of the warehouse door to show time passing.

Bo has already walked closer to her warehouse when we see her getting frustrated. The idea behind this shot came before I knew that I wanted to have big explosion as the main conflict in the animation. She walks away and the robot is running towards her and she notices the ground shaking.

In the animatic this was still present, but during the animation process adjustments made this scene unnecessary.



Storyboard

Animatic

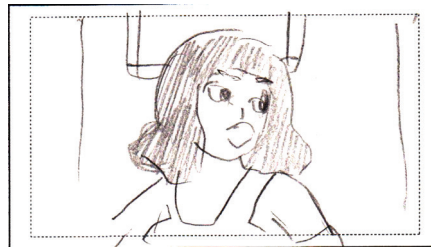
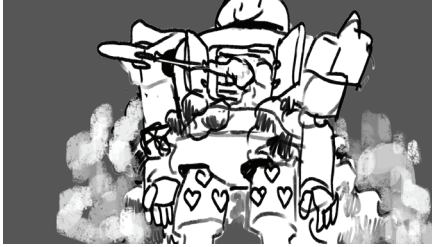
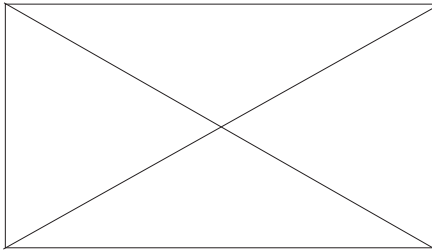
Animation

Details of the robot slowly turning on.
The camera returns to the close-up of the
hand. This time it moves.

Following the true robot animation style
there had to be explosion. I only had to
choose if the explosions came from the
rockets or some body part working as
projectile.

This was the most difficult part to make
work. The viewer doesn't know that robot
has built in rocket launchers. If I just show
rockets launching, audience thinks that
rockets came out of nowhere. So they
needed to be introduced to the viewer.

Next there was added a shot of opening
chest panel revealing the rockets.



Storyboard

Animatic

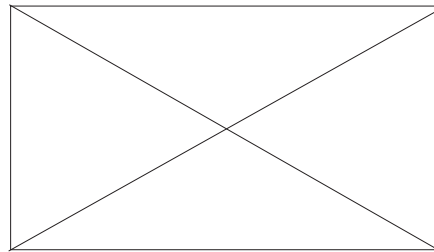
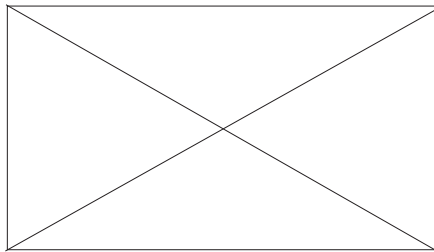
Animation

Because of the adjustments done to the animation, I needed to add a close-up of Bo's face when she notices that the chest panel is opening.

If you show rockets launch you have to show where they hit.

To give a moment to react, scene was made where she coughs and then grows alarmed after the dust has settled.

Showing only the shadow of the robot made my job as an animator easier and it also works nicely as a symbol for the danger Bo is facing.



Storyboard

Animatic

Animation

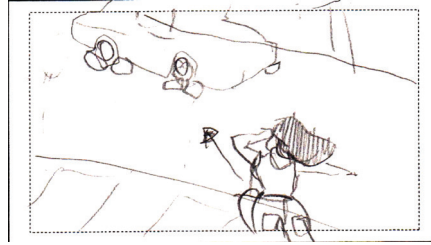
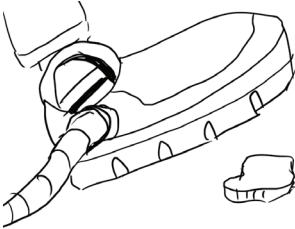
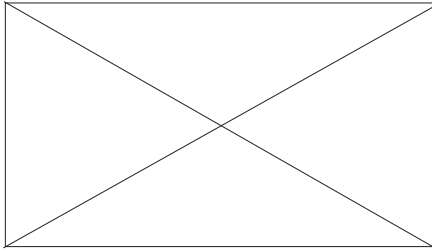
Here I made the decision to only show the robot's shadow in the whole chase act, until the robot catches up with Bo. It works really well as a suspense builder and tells audience how far away the robot is from Bo.

Here the approaching shadow works better than shot of the robot which is too big to fit the frame and I wanted to save the visual effect until the scene with the car for stronger impact.

Camera is also turned so the destruction in the background can be shown as Bo starts running.

Running through the alleyway. Added the shadow to support my visual rule for the robot.

To build up the suspense, scene altered between running Bo and the shadow approaching her.



Storyboard

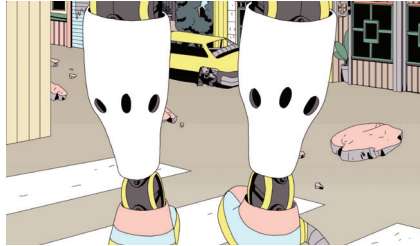
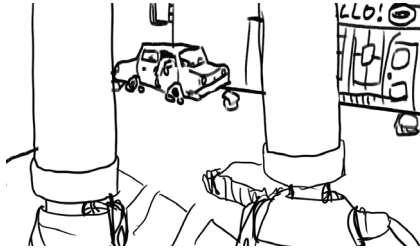
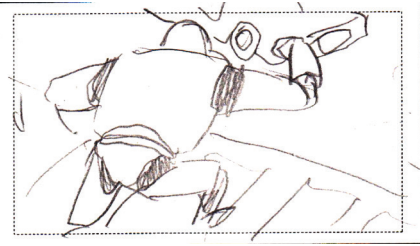
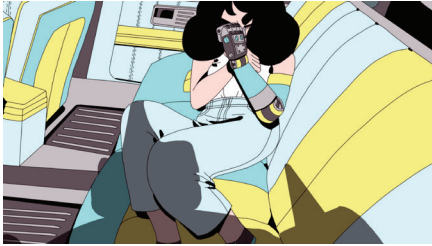
Animatic

Animation

The close up scene of the robots foot crushing block of concrete was Professor Nomura's idea. This way Robots power and the real danger for Bo is displayed.

The noise of breaking concrete makes Bo watch back.

A special note: Professor Nomura always challenged to think where the camera is on the set. Because there was a building where the green area is Professor Nomura commented that the camera wouldn't fit there and it would break the illusion. Even if the film is animated people still want to know where the camera is and they will search it unconsciously.



Storyboard

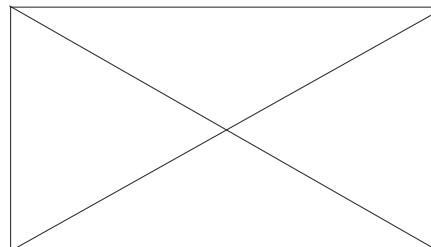
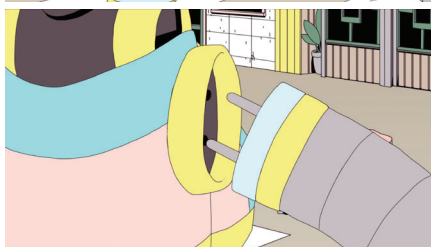
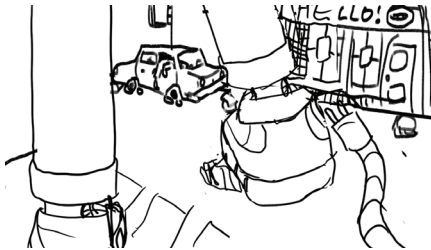
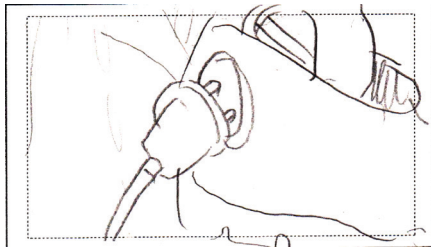
Animatic

Animation

View of terrified Bo inside the car and the familiar shadow getting nearer.

Robots size was inconsistent in storyboard. This was fixed in animatic.

Camera watching Bo's car through gigantic robot legs is more menacing.



Storyboard

Animatic

Animation

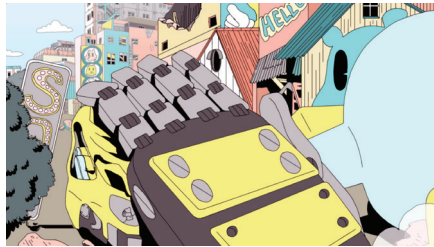
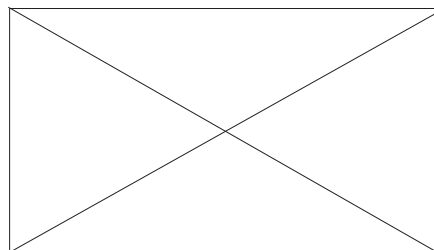
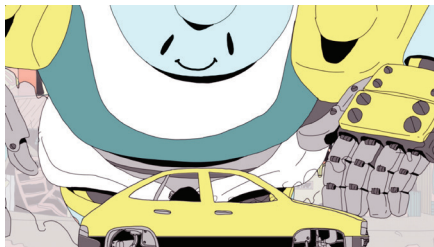
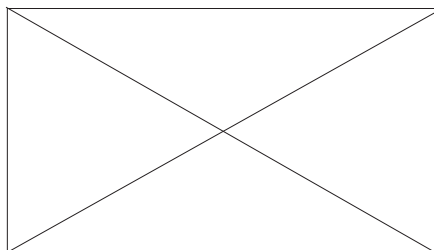
One of the big questions with the storyboard was, why does the robot stop? Problem was solved by answering questions like, what does Bo use to power up the robot oil or electricity? How does the electricity get to the robot? Because plugs are universal and people recognise what they are used for, I decided to use a gigantic electric plug.

I thought it would be funny to save Bo's life by having the plug disconnect. Something so everyday in really absurd environment.

Animation and animatic differs with the close-up shot of the unplugging.

In the storyboard I wasn't sure if I could animate the robot crash to the ground, so I left it out. But with Professor Nomuras support one of the key scenes got animated.

Robot falling on top of the car is the first scene that I animated. Professor Nomura said that this is the hardest one, you should start from here. I do believe that was a wise decision, because in the beginning you have the most enthusiasm and motivation. It took me five days to animate this scene. I had huge bruises on my knees after few days of falling down in front of the mirror. But it was all worth it. When I knew I could animate this scene I started to believed I could animate rest of the animation too.



Storyboard

Animatic

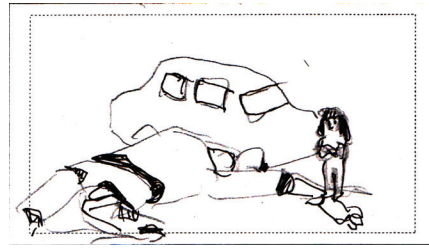
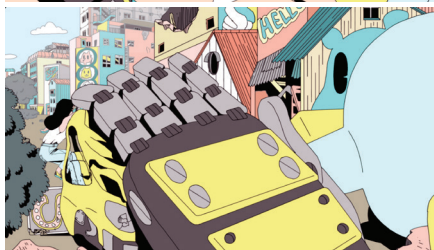
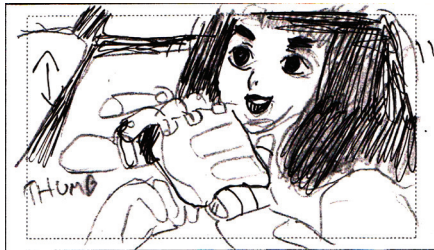
Animation

I was instructed to make a scene more terrifying by adding more broken glass and bending metal to the scene.

But instead of just showing more metal and glass Bo's terror is shown as a close-up of her face, when the robot falls and almost kills her.

When making a set of rules and using time to build a world, the animation starts to make design decisions by itself. The rule was to show her face in close range only when her emotions change or something important happens.

The angle was changed to give more interesting and varied scenery. This angle also provides opportunity for the falling neon sign.



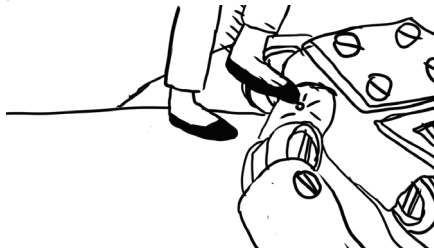
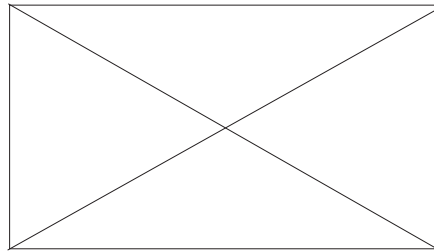
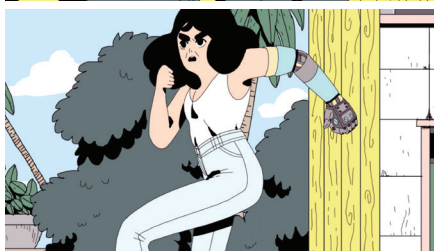
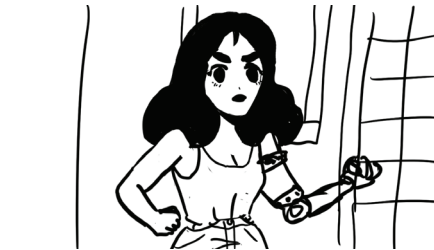
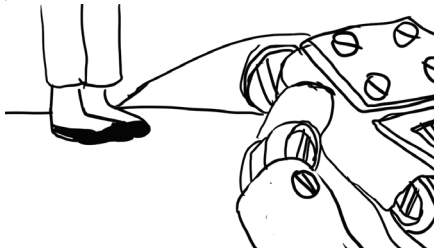
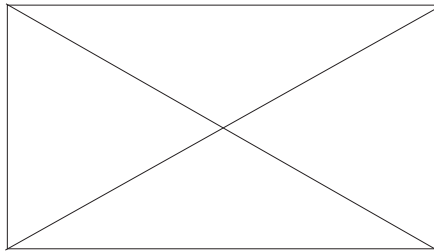
Storyboard

Animatic

Animation

Again shot of Bo's face as her mood changes. In the animatic this was lacking, but it was added later for the animation.

When Bo rises on top of the car, camera shows her from both sides. This way her emotions can be displayed better.



Storyboard

Animatic

Animation

The storyboard ends here, but the story arc had to be closed.

In the beginning Bo's ordeal begins when she kicks the robot, so it was only fitting that she kicks the robot again. If she learned anything new, it doesn't change her personality. Bo is still as rash and impatient as ever.

In the end credits Bo is still working and haven't given up. The titles were the last thing done to the animation and that was the message I wanted to convey to people after finally finishing my animation. By being resilient you can finish despite the obstacles.

CONCLUSIONS

- Know your goals
- Investigate
- Embrace the failure
- Piece the work in small portions
- Conversations
- Finally

Conclusions

For my thesis production, I made my first short animation. I have told about my inspirations and the decisions that lead in the final production. In my research I have been investigating the psychological aspects of creative processes, to better understand how the brain works when you are creating something.

After I finished my first animation I can say that I am happy with the results. It was a good decision not to settle with the other projects I had started. I think my animation is now 100% me. There is still lot to improve: some timing problems, facial expressions and some clumsiness in movement. But it was my first animation and the next one will be better.

I have to say that the course in Tamabi was better than expected. I learned so much, even if professor Nomura didn't speak perfect English, I would have conversations with him. He would draw and give his comments about first my storyboard then animatic and finally the animation. Japan inspired me also in other ways, Tokyo can be clearly seen in my backgrounds and in the general feeling of the whole animation.

Know your goals

At first you must know what you are aiming for. To finish something you have to know why you are doing it. What is your personal motivation: Why are you doing what ever you are doing? If you can't answer this, you have to realize it or you can find it difficult to keep motivated. For example, while I was interviewed at Aalto University entrance exams, I said that I wanted to do exchange study and link it to my master thesis. The place to go or reason why was then not yet decided. I said it because my personal goal in life is to be kind of international person.

On the first year of studies, the thought of making an animation spring to life. My main inspirations were Studio Ghibli and Japanese culture in general. First steps in becoming an animator were taken when I chose a academic minor called Pixstories, where the main goal was to produce an animation. With this in mind it was a logical decision to go for an exchange in Tamabi University in Tokyo, which is well-known for its animation department.

The four projects that were abandoned had colliding motivations. Not only was there a motivation to become an animator, but there were personal goals and a need to cultivate my own individual style. The other ideas were good in their own right and the teachers encouraged me to complete one of them, but since I felt they were not 100% me, I chose to abandon them. Finding my own style was the first obstacle that needed to be crossed before the goal of being animator could be achieved. By constantly searching for an idea and style I started developing my own personal style. By going through a lot of animations and illustrations, I formed a personal reference library of things that worked especially for me. As I discussed on the subject of what is creativity, it's impossible to create anything completely original. But we can piece together old things in a new and interesting ways. So when my exchange in Tamabi began, I was more than ready to create something that fulfills both of my goals.

Investigate

While studying in Tokyo, before we actually started to design anything, our class watched short animations for 3-5 hours every day. Afterwards classes started with students showing what they have done for the other students. Professor was constantly looking for animations that might have solutions for the students' problems. So we watched lot of animations while we were making animations. I have talked about how to make restrictions for your work, how they will help you to solve problems with your project. You do not need to invent the wheel every time you face a new problem.

To create something you need to collect database to base your work on. Even though I have said that there needs to be time to think and let your brain rest, but you should still keep feeding your brain with new knowledge at a steady flow. Part of being motivated and a good problem solver is to match up your problem with things around you. To keep your eyes open for possibilities.

When I have been tracing the tracks of my own inspirations and influences, it's mix-and-match of different things that I have collected from my surroundings. I was lucky to go to Tokyo and do my animation there. The influences of my experience are so obvious, but it's not uncommon for animators to do some field work. Studios like Ghibli and Disney take their animators and background artists for trips to locations that are the closest real life examples of what they want to achieve in their animation.

Investigation can also mean a lot of drawing and doing your characters and themes. In an interview Miyazaki describes his creation process as a repetition. He first imagines himself as the characters and creates the outlines in his head. He will visit the locations for many times. Only after this he starts drawing the character again and again. He says that he always finishes just before the deadline. (Midnighteye)

Embrace the failures.

My failures came from my difficulty to commit into a project. Ideas changed once a month and every time I found something new. I want to think that university is time to find yourself and do exploration. And I don't think of my four abandoned ideas as failures, but as a part of my learning and exploration process. I have come out of my masters studies as a completely new person and it's mostly because of all this exploration and trying out new ideas.

For thesis project, amount of references were actually making the project more difficult. There was three concepts that were production ready, but none of them felt quite right. The thing about "The Italian method" is that it takes time. You have to get through many ideas and develop what you are doing for long time in order to get past the most obvious ideas.

Piece the work in small portions

Dividing the work into smaller goals makes your life easier. Big projects are not possible to finish in one sitting. One thing that I had to learn was to set myself sub-goals and schedule a project of this magnitude. The most eye opening experience during the process was a use of weekly goals and presentations. This turned into steady paced routine before the finish line.

The problems arise when we are doing something for ourselves, because it's easy to forget and just drop the project. It's important to make working routine into a habit. Do something daily even if it's something small. If you draw even just one line, you keep thinking about and doing the project. This is where motivation and goals need to be visible. Procrastination is a real threat.

Conversations

If your artistic process is something that needs to have some message or idea that you want to transfer, testing out the idea with teachers and friends is quite important. Throughout the process of creating the animation I was constantly showing and discussing about my project with different people. Being shy about your work never helps. By showcasing your work you can get help and the approval of your peers, and that can give you boost in confidence to help you to move onwards.

Finally

I am stating the obvious here. Everybody knows how they can finish projects, but it takes much effort and motivation. For that there are no magic tricks. I couldn't have finished my project without learning the artistic processes that work for me. When finishing project that takes more than 800 hours, you need to have a plan. I made excuses like: this is the way I am, I have no patience, or my way of doing is by controlled chaos and I know what I am doing. In my case I did not. I had the creative chaos but no control. When I was considering what to write about in my thesis, I wanted to document and investigate how my artistic process evolved and how I can use this knowledge in the future.

I have talked with friends and colleagues about their processes and everybody tackles their projects little differently. In creative field we don't have a universal model what works for everybody. Only way to find out what works individually is through trial and error. So what I have learned is that you have to work hard. Give yourself time when you need it. And there are no magic tricks for finishing anything.

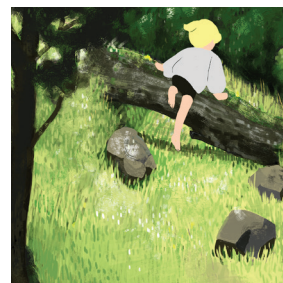
I do realize that what I thought were failures were actually time used to explore for what I wanted to do. Through failures I learned and collected data. And I worked out the way my brain functions. I have started to feel less guilty about making changes and dropping projects that have no future. One of my inspirations for this topic was Charles Huettner, animator who has an animatic in Vimeo called *Winter House* (abandoned project). It's a half finished animation with almost three minutes of finished material. We all have abandoned projects but Huettner used the best ideas from *Winter House* and inserted them into his breakthrough animation *The Jump*. For me it was important to learn that the journey is just as important as the destination.

GHIBLI INFLUENCED

Boy and Statue



Girl and Alien

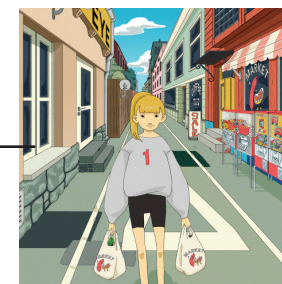


PERSONAL STYLE

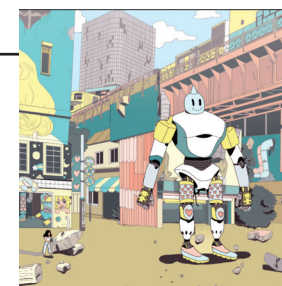
Pixstories



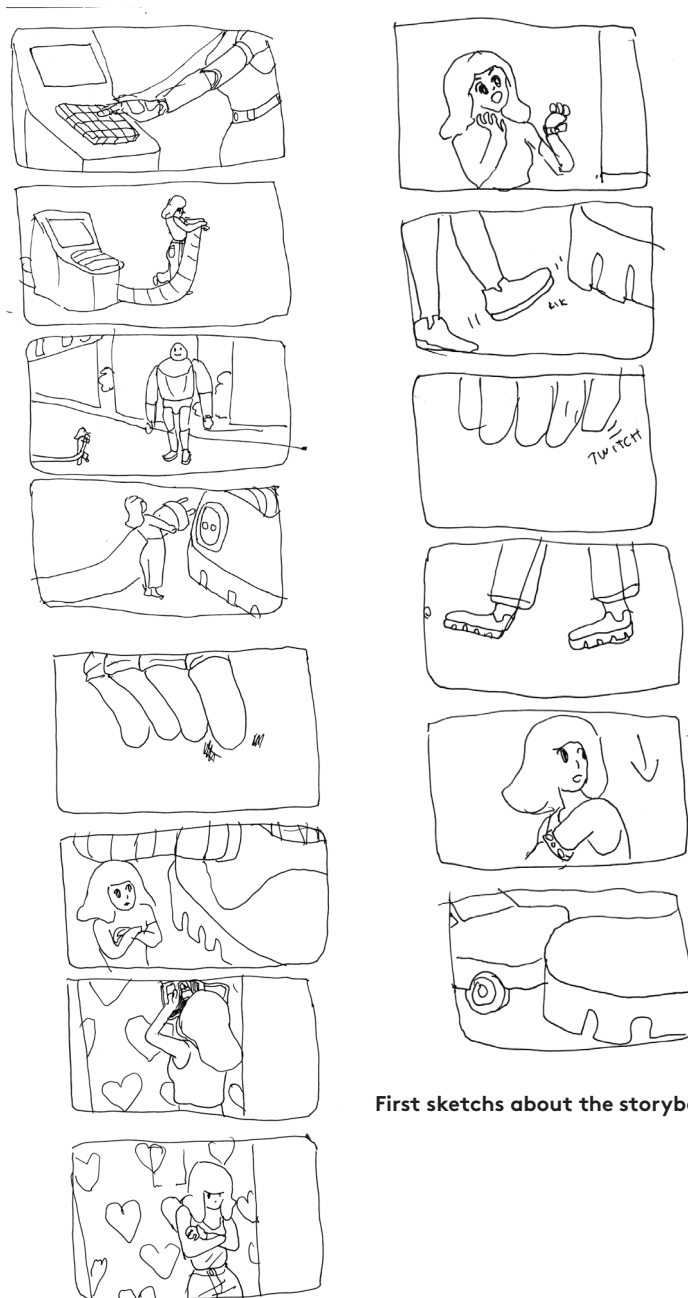
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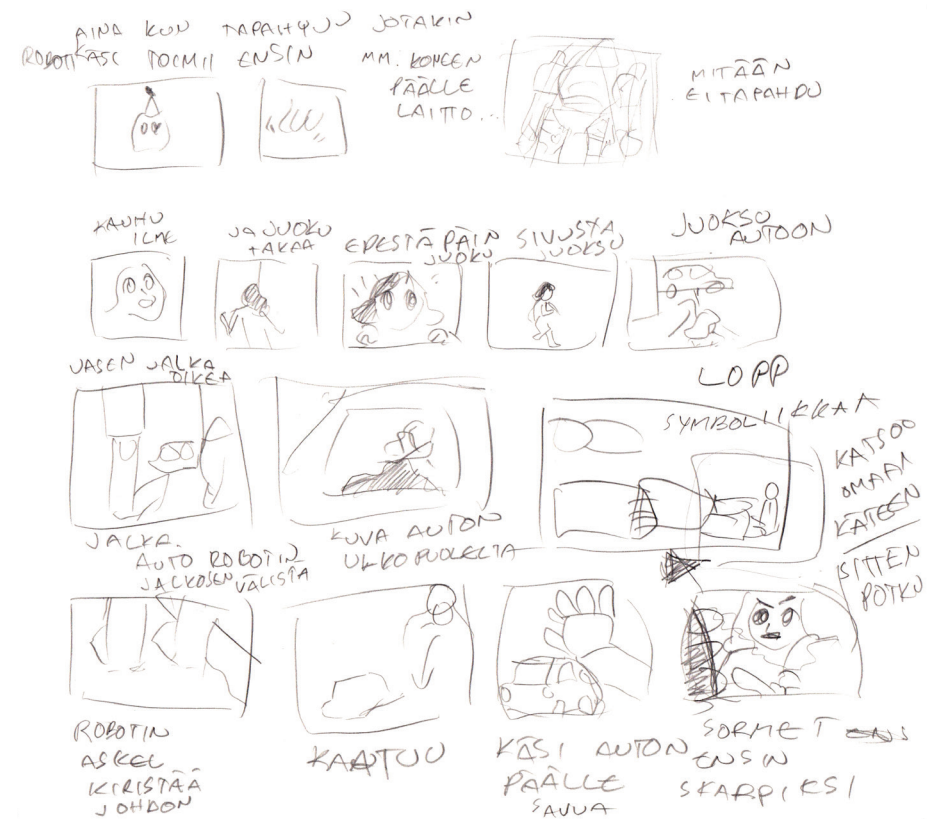
Bo's First Robot



2017 Finished project
Bo's First Robot

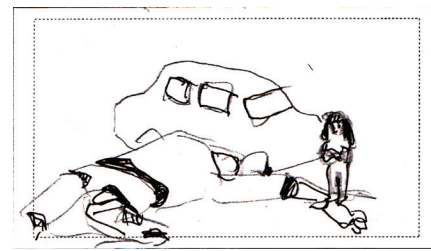
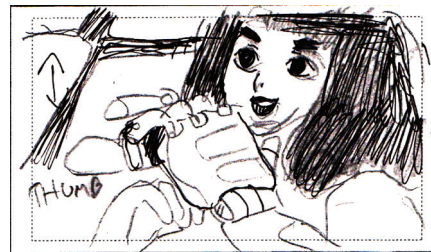
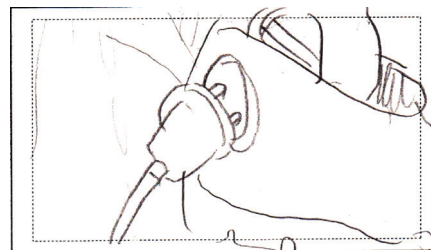
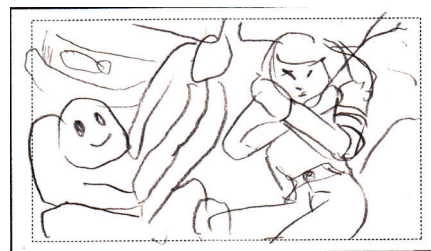
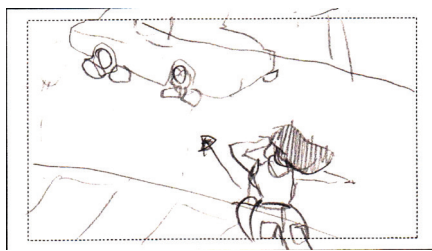
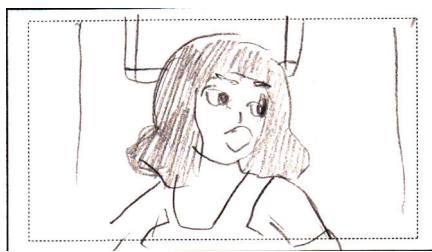
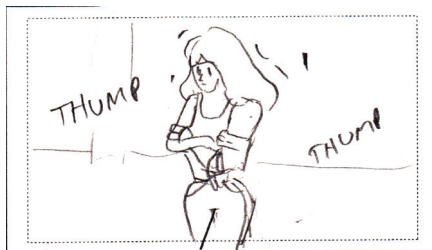
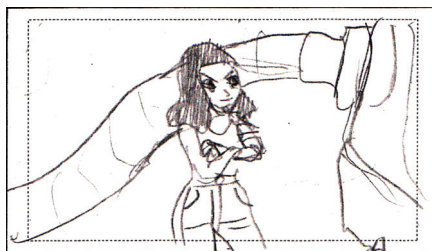
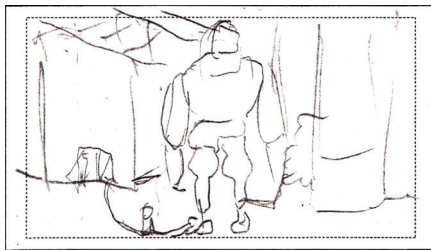
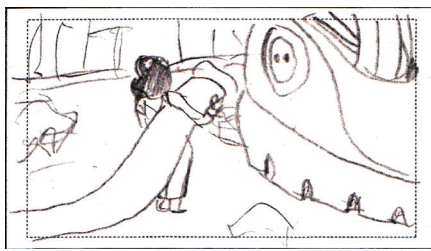
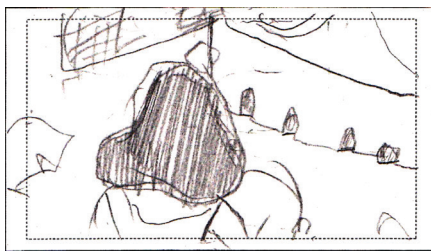
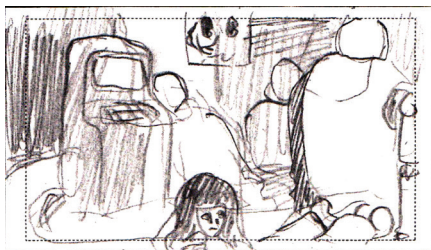
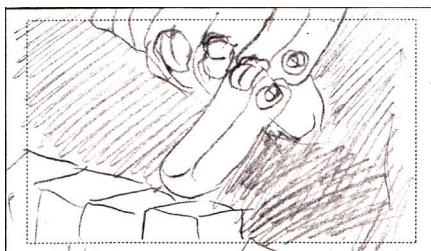


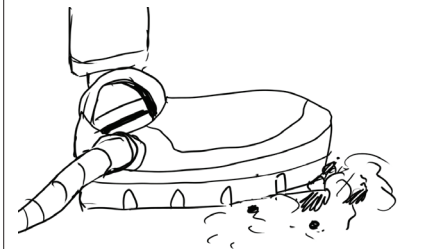
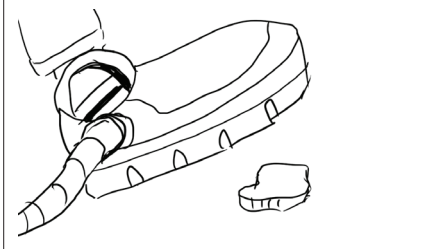
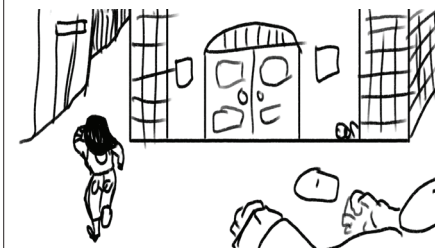
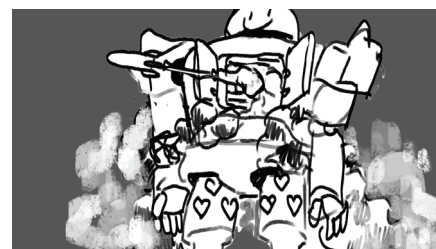
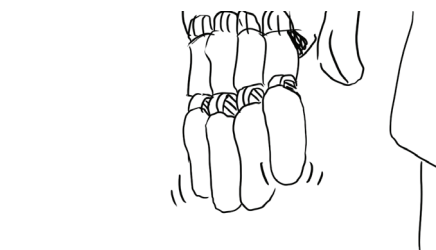
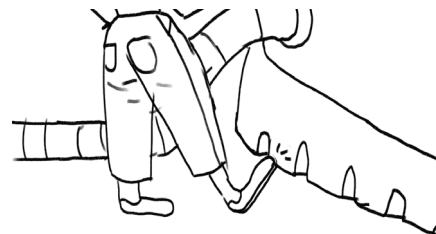
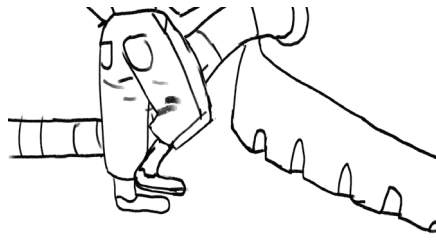
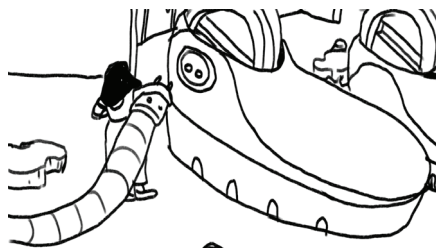
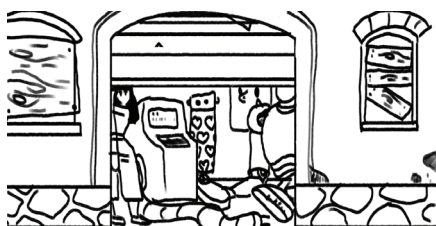
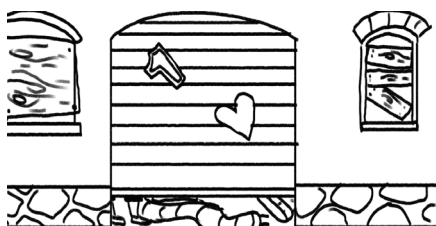
First sketches about the storyboard

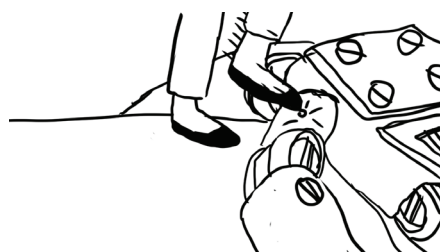
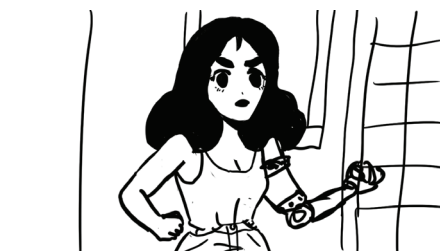
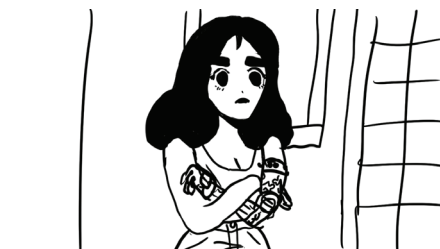
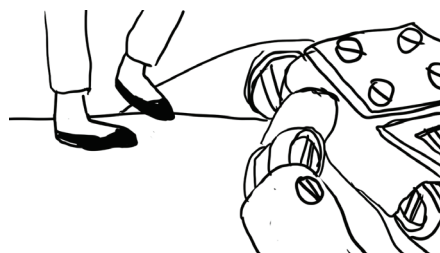
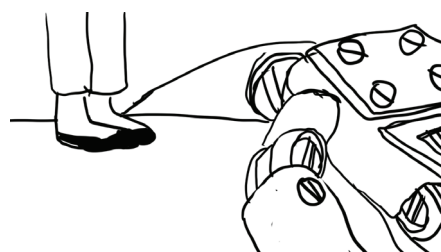
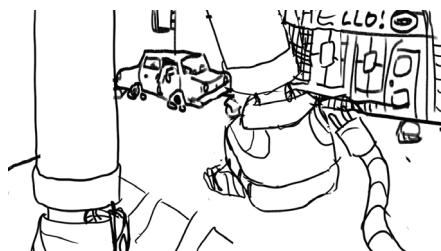
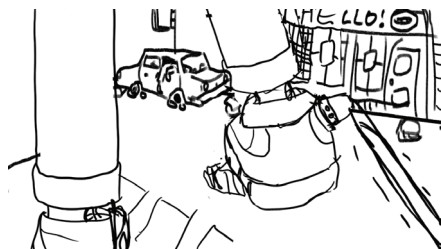
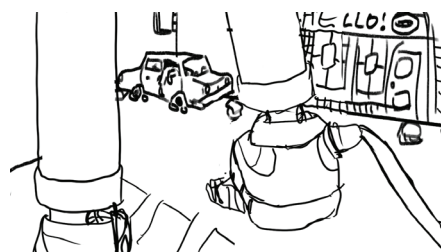
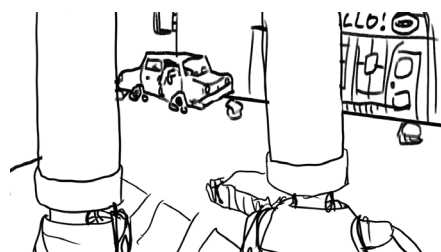


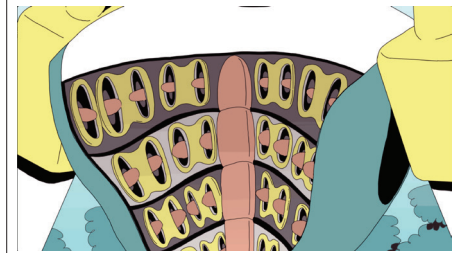
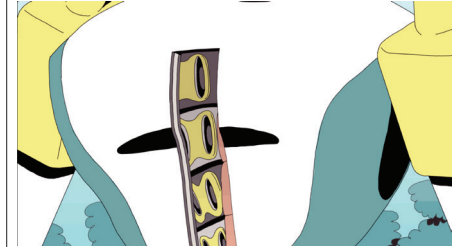
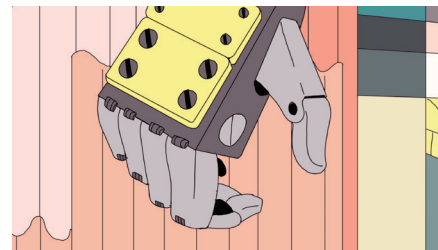
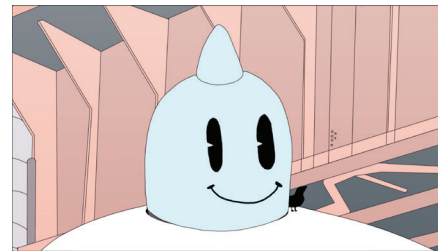
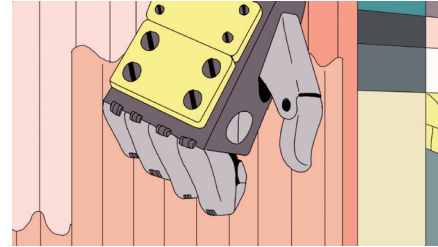
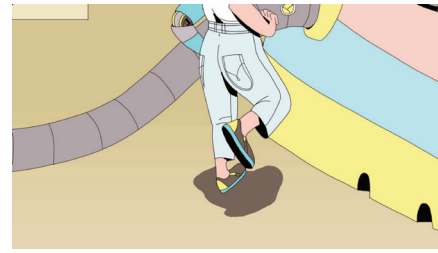
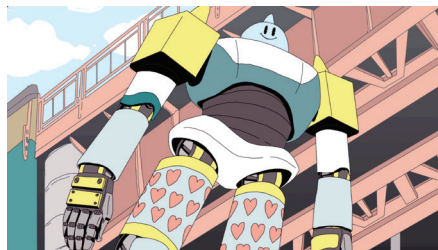
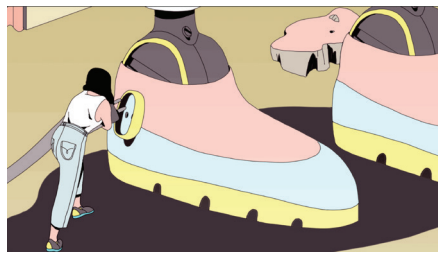
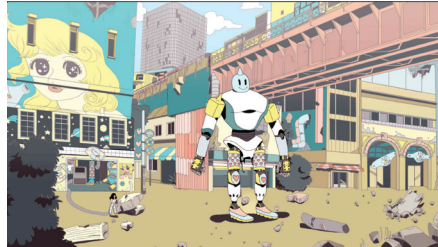
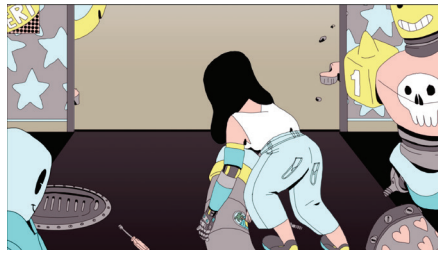
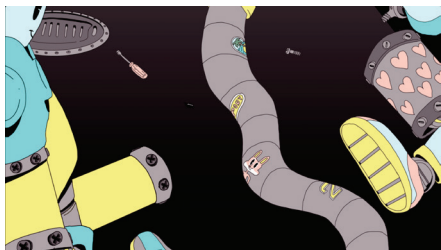
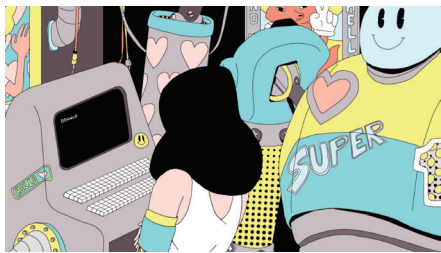
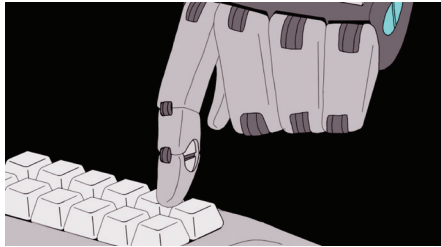
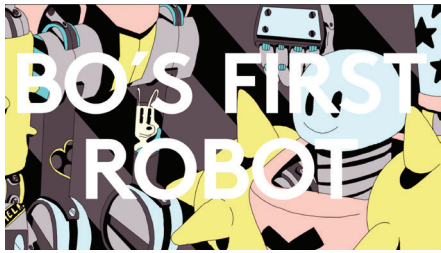
Notes from meeting with Professor Nomura

Storyboard

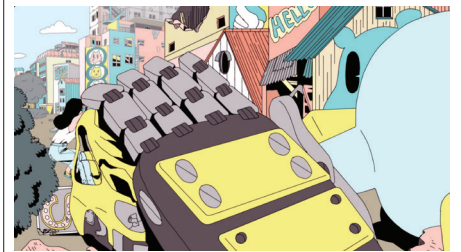
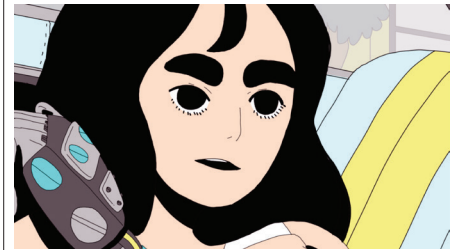
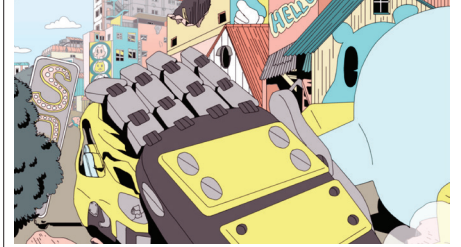
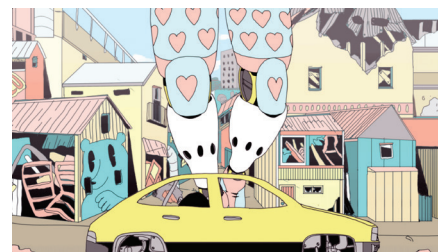
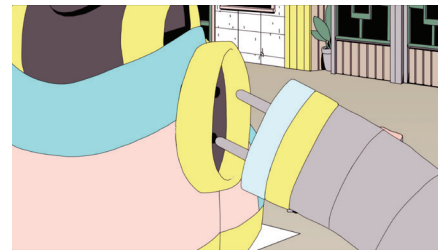
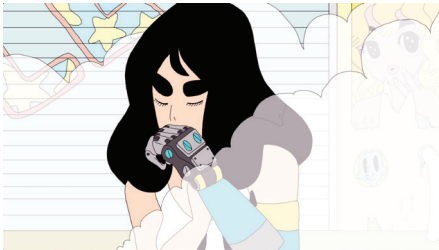








Animation stills



Animation stills



REFERENCES

- Bibliography
- Articles and PDF's
- Pictures
- Short films
- Films
- TV-shows

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Ryusuke Hikawa, 2013 <http://mediag.jp/project/project/images/JapaneseAnimationGuide.pdf> used: 13.09.2016

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Future_Boy_Conan used: 14.09.2016

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studio_Ghibli used: 14.09.2016

Tom Mes, 2002 <http://www.midnighteye.com/interviews/hayao-miyazaki/> used: 15.03.2017

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akira_\(1988_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akira_(1988_film))

Jesse Colombo, 2012 <http://www.thebubblebubble.com/japan-bubble/> used: 16.03.2017

Animeeveryday, 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XeBW08HbMk> used: 16.03.2017

Ross Bonander, http://uk.askmen.com/entertainment/special_feature_150/183_special_feature.html used: 16.03.2017

1999 <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/1999-09-02/black-and-white-to-become-anime-tekkon-kinkreet> used: 17.03.2017

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gobelins_School_of_the_Image used: 15.03.2017

Pictures:

[1] <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/yrtcAHhOVXQ/maxresdefault.jpg>

[2] http://vignette1.wikia.nocookie.net/characters/images/4/4b/Oswald_the_lucky_rabbit.gif/revision/latest?cb=20110603173624

[3] http://vignette1.wikia.nocookie.net/astroboy/images/1/15/Ambassador_atom.jpg/revision/latest?cb=20160517011330

[4] <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/0b/2c/5f/0b2c5ff92cefdc5d2a065e53caefda35.gif>

[5] <http://www.fact.co.uk/media/18849102/akira15.jpg>

[6] <http://strongisland.co/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/neo-tokyo.jpg>

[7] <http://imgur.com/2ETzNTV>

[8] <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/ad/84/fe/ad-84fe189c399a4023c013914c2ba0c2.jpg>

Short films:

[9] **Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamne 2015**

Goblins graduation film: Perrine Bayssat, Sarah Dhorne, Etienne Molinier, Emilie Phuong, Isabella Piolat
Sound Design: Vincent Hazard
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sReQrbJVc6c>

[10] **Wildfire 2015**

Goblins graduation film: Hugues Opter, Pierre Pinon, Nicole Stafford, Valentin Stoll, Arnaud Tribout, Shang Zhang
Music: Pablo Pico
Sound design: Vincent Hazard
<https://vimeo.com/133021237>

[11] **Oh Shit! 2014**

Independant animated project made by Caroline Cherrier and Hugues Opter, Arthus Pilorget, Pierre Pinon, Johan Ravit, Valentin Stoll, Arnaud Tribout and Vincent Tsui
Sound Design / music : Martin Pinon
<https://vimeo.com/95276512>

Ohayo 2010

Short film directed by: Satoshi Kon
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAcHe06jiVY>

The Jump and Winter House (abandoned film) 2013

Charles Huettner
<https://vimeo.com/charleshuettner>

Films:

Akira 1988

Director: Katsuhiro Otomo
Running time: 124 minutes
Country: Japan
Production company: Tokyo Movie Shinsha

Tekkonkrinkreet 2006

Director: Michael Arias
Running time: 110 minutes
Country: Japan
Studio: Studio 4°C

The Animatrix 2003

Beyond
Director: Kori Mojomoto
Country: Japan
Studio: Studio 4°C

TV-shows:

Future Boy Conan 1978

Directors: Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata

Episodes: 26

Country: Japan

Studio: Nippon Animation

Astro Boy 1963

Director: Osamu Tezuka

Episodes: 193

Country: Japan

Studio: Mushi Production

Tetsujin Go-28

Director: Yonehiko Watanabe

Episodes: 97

Country: Japan

Studio: TCJ

THANK YOU